

A TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL INTRODUCING CHANGE BY  
BRIDGING THE GENERATIONS AND EMPOWERING  
CONGREGATIONS IN A RURAL A.M.E.  
CHURCH SETTING

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## **ABSTRACT**

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by

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The objective of this project was to introduce positive change by bridging the generation gap and empowering the Clover Garden A.M.E. Church, a rural, family-centered congregation in Burlington, NC. The triangulation methodology included preaching sessions, an examination of traditional worship by focus groups, the appointment of a Junior Steward Board, and the organization of Junior Stewardess Board. Findings of the project revealed members were resistant and divided but a transformation took place where there was a sharp increase in membership, attendance, and tithing. Recommendations included the collaboration of the junior boards with the senior boards in planning innovative programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A dissertation is never written in isolation. All the persons who touch, influence, inspire, and even hinder your life help you in the writing process. The lessons you have learned and the individuals who taught you hover over your shoulders, waiting to see if you mastered the materials. In the same way that “it takes a village to raise a child,” it has taken my entire community to write this dissertation. This assignment has been made possible by the grace of God and the auspices of people who encouraged me by His Spirit.

First, I would like to give honor, praise and glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the vision to see the need to design a model to introduce change that will birth new life into a small rural AME Church that will fill aching hearts with hope and purpose and will explode with new life. I thank God for the journey and God’s grace and mercy on my life, my family and ministry. I thank God for the prayers and support of my family, friends and loved ones, especially my father in Ministry Bishop John R. Bryant presently the Presiding Prelate of the Fifth Episcopal District of the AME Church and my sister mentor, Rev. Dr. Cecelia Williams-Bryant, Episcopal Supervisor throughout this Ministry Project.

I would like to concede the insight and inspiration of my mentors: Drs. Ricky Woods and Terry Thomas who bestowed costly treasures within my spirit and challenged me with radical thought about mission in Christ as well as the Peer Group and to

committed professional associates: Dr. Donna-Durham Pierre, Rev. Dr. Carrington Carter, and Dr. Joyce Williams-Green for their invaluable contributions, time and ideas. I thank God for context associates: Ms. Louise Butler, Mr. Seawell Wilson, Mrs. Gail Parker, and Terry Ratliff for their energy, ideas and support through this Ministry Project. I thank God for Toni Shaw, Brenda Rowdy, and Carolyn Graham for serving as collaboration partners.

Special thanks to the Clover Garden AME Church for their love, concern and support in designing this project.

Warm thanks are extended to the Right Reverend Adam Jefferson Richardson, Presiding Prelate of the Second Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church, and Elder Benjamin Foust, Presiding Elder of the Western District of the Western North Carolina Conference. I thank God for my adopted daughter, Rita Brown and her typing skills, as well as my editor, Dr. Patricia Johnson. Finally, I thank God for the lives that this Ministry Project will touch and help transform. To God be the glory, for great things He has done.

## **DEDICATION**

This Ministry Model is dedicated to my mother, Naomi Peay, whose educational attainments covered only the third grade. However, she desired more for me. I pray it will allow her to live out through this accomplishment what she did not achieve. However, this project came by the Grace and Mercy of God. With all of my love, I dedicate this compilation to you.

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## INTRODUCTION

This work was birthed in response to a great need within the rural church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As the writer did a careful analysis of the Clover Garden AME Church of Burlington, North Carolina in collaboration with context associates, mentors, and professional associates, a ministry project was implemented to address a crucial and critical issue: the need for change to bridge the generations. It was evident that many of the officers, leaders and members of this particular rural ministry were unequipped and unprepared to do ministry effectively in the church and the community because of the resistance to change. Though the church has a legacy steeped in a rich history of tradition and heritage, the survival of the rural church could be threatened by the church's lack of acknowledgement that Jesus declares, "if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."<sup>1</sup>

The model of ministry to be addressed will seek to raise the level of inclusiveness and empowerment among rural church leaders along with congregants in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The days are gone when individuals or certain groups make all the decisions. The transformational change ministry model to be explored in this document shall focus on the need for the rural church, in particular, to raise the issue of inclusiveness as a means of bridging the generations and empowering the congregation. The reader of this document shall see that the writer has attempted to increase the level of feelings of

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 3:25 KJV

different age groups of rural congregants by combining information, inspiration and invoke implementation.

The focal point of Chapter One will concentrate on the many needs within the ministry focus and will then hone in on actual development of the ministry model: shared leadership and involvement in all areas of ministry that would ultimately bring about Transformational Change. The middle section will focus on the context in which the project was implemented, including a detailed history of the Clover Garden AME Church and a general overview of the membership and ministry demographics. The final portion of the first chapter will present a brief spiritual autobiography of the writer, highlighting the writer's own spiritual development and how that has influenced this writing and the ministry project as a whole.

The second chapter will offer a brief synopsis of the literary works that the writer deems necessary to the development of the ministry project. This chapter will also inform and introduce the reader to the foundational framework of the primary means by which the ministry project will be implemented: the leadership.

The third chapter presents the material that undergirds the entire premise of the ministry project. This chapter will provide a framework for the reader to grasp an adequate understanding of the historical, biblical and theological foundation upon which the rural church would be able to introduce change to bridge the generations and empower the congregation.

The fourth chapter will simply describe the method and the design of the transformational model that was implemented at the Clover Garden AME Church introducing change by bridging the generations and empowering the congregants. The



intervention or treatment applied to the context will be defined and described as well as the instrumentation to be used upon the participants of the ministry model.

The fifth chapter will attempt to reveal the results of the model after it was implemented within the given context. The analysis of the data will be presented as well as a few illustrative charts. This chapter will also offer the reader a report of the positive and negative results of the model and its effect upon the context as a whole.

The sixth chapter will offer the writer's own theological and practical reflections on the field experience discussed in Chapter Five. The writer will then discuss a few suggestions and recommendations for future research within this field of study. This chapter will provide an overall summary of the ministry project, including its successes and failures. This final chapter will serve as a conclusion to the document.

## CHAPTER ONE

### MINISTRY FOCUS

The focus of this doctoral project is to implement leadership as the key to meaningful ministry in order to introduce a transformational model of change by bridging generations in a rural AME Church setting. Leadership is critical in this project as set forth in Bishop Mark Hanson's *Renewing Congregations—Change Factors*.<sup>1</sup> According to Bishop Hanson's article, the three key factors in transformation into dynamic ministry are purpose, willingness to change, and leadership. Because systems move only with direction, leadership is a key component to introducing change.<sup>2</sup> From Moses to David to Jesus Christ himself, God has used leaders to change people. A congregation is unlikely to change from a stagnant or declining state into a vibrant one without good leadership.<sup>3</sup>

In a rapidly changing world of modern science, advanced technology, and information age, many rural churches within America are drastically failing to face the challenges of effective leadership within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is evident that the rural church, particularly within many African American communities, is not equipped or prepared to provide the next level of ministry to a world in dire need of Divine direction and deliverance. As more individuals migrate from the inner cities and urban centers into the suburban and rural centers of society, there is a tremendous ministry opportunity for

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Hanson, *Renewing Congregations—Change Factor*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Available from <http://www.ecla.org/outreach/change-factors.html>, (Accessed 24 November 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the rural churches within these communities. It is extremely unfortunate that there is a lack of leadership, commitment, and understanding in the areas of worship, educational ministries, technology, evangelism, community outreach and church growth within the rural ministry context. Preston Washington, pastor of Harlem's Memorial Baptist Church, in his discussion on the renewal of the black church states that, "At the threshold of the twenty-first century, probably the most important question facing the pilgrim people called Afro-Americans is will the black church survive? This is not simply a rhetorical question; the church is the single most prominent and important institution in the black community. It is both terrifying and challenging to realize that as the church goes, so goes the community, the nation, and in large measure, the world."<sup>4</sup> The African-American religious community is in need of change, restoration and renewal, particularly within the rural context of ministry, if effective transformation is to be brought about within the hearts and minds of the people.

One of the main challenges within the ministry focus of the rural church is that a large portion of the congregants have lost sight of the true mission and primary purpose of the church: the worship of God through Christ. Transformative worship is an integral component to the concept of twenty-first century ministry and leadership. "One of the most important dimensions of the church's ministry is the experience of worship."<sup>5</sup> With all of the challenges and obstacles that life in the twenty-first century will inevitably bring, people need to worship and experience a God who can and will empower them for leadership in every aspect of their personal lives. "The point of prophetic worship is to

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<sup>4</sup> Preston Robert Washington, *God's Transforming Spirit: Black Church Renewal* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *African-American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 55.

place people in touch with those transformative elements of meaning which give life new direction, purpose, vitality and strength.”<sup>6</sup> It is a sad commentary that many rural churches continue to practice worship methodologies that are ineffective in reaching the needs of people. There is a lack of holistic ministry within the worship experiences of many rural churches, which often results in a lack of commitment within the congregation and throughout the community. Effective outreach and community involvement is birthed as a result of a genuine love for and worship of God. “Churches often don’t grow because their worship services are dry, lifeless, devoid of the passion and enthusiasm for the celebration of the life that the Holy Spirit creates.”<sup>7</sup> If the rural church is going to do effective ministry in the twenty-first century, the congregants must be open to innovative ideas and approaches toward a worship encounter that addresses the needs of all people within the context, thus opening up the door for new possibilities in the area of community outreach. Dr. James H. Harris, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia addresses the issue of worship that will change, transform, touch lives, and provoke Christians to go forth and do something meaningful within the local community, the region, and even perhaps globally:

The task of worship in the black church is to be true to our heritage and to God. When the author looks around urban and rural areas, she sees people hurting and in trouble. This suggests that preachers and laypersons have an awesome responsibility in trying to do the will of God. We have to construct public worship in a way that will help change society to what we believe God would have it to be.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>8</sup> James H. Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), 95-96.

Introducing a transformational model introducing change in a rural AME Church setting is not a new problem. This phenomenon of introducing change has plagued the community of faith since its inception and is a current ongoing dilemma. Dr. Roger Franklin Gedcke concurred in his D. Min project; “Integrating Newcomers into Rurban Congregation,”

That growth brings about change that exposes our congregations to what often seems to be frightening, confusing, and threatening. It is overwhelming for people who have grown up in a long-established community to find themselves surrounded by people who are not related to anyone in their family. The newcomers bring with them a new mixture of needs and expectations that often results in a confused excitement. Often congregants do not know which way to proceed. We have become a rural church with a fearful desire to reach beyond our community boundaries. The fear is we will lose who we are and become something we are not.<sup>9</sup>

The Clover Garden AME Church located in Burlington, North Carolina has become a rural church with a fearful desire to reach beyond community boundaries. The fear is that the church will lose who they are and become something that they are not. The fear of Clover Garden is it will lose the close familiar nature of the congregation and the older and established will lose their tradition.

Although this model does not focus entirely on newcomers being integrated into the congregation’s ministry, the concept of integration and involvement of all members into ministry is the idea communicated by Gedcke. That concept in essence is what this model proposes. Thus, this church model will help eliminate a portion of the existing members from being excluded from serving in ministry and preventing kingdom growth.

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<sup>9</sup> Roger Franklin Gedcke, “Integrating Newcomers into Rurban Congregation: a Case Study in North Branch, Michigan” (D. Min. Thesis, Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary), 1.

Dr. Mack asserts, “When the Holy Spirit is in charge in church, He brings us together and takes us to the next level together.”<sup>10</sup>

The researcher’s passion for this project grows out of a need for the African-American church to practice inclusion, experience growth and keep its place of prominence in the life of the African-American community. Many rural churches have become immobilized with this identity crisis leaving so many to make it on their own. An examination of Clover Garden AME Church revealed that the church had experienced a gradual increase in younger members who have experienced a new lifestyle. As such, senior members of the congregation are receiving this new growth with much ambivalence and anxiety.

In an attempt to expand its image to a more extroverted ministry, Clover Garden’s congregation wanted to be known as a rural church that reaches beyond its community boundaries. However, the congregation was not prepared for what was coming. As a result, Clover Garden found itself in the midst of a serious identity crisis. The congregation became two churches within a church. The division was: a) the church wishing to keep things the way they were, and b) the church consisting of a new generation with new energies and ideas. It became apparent that the new congregants and the younger generation now required a more involved role in the operations of the church’s work and ministry.

This project sought to raise the level of tolerance for new families as well as the inclusion for all members into a traditionally closed community. The phrase, “traditional closed community” referred to approximately two or three biological families that were

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<sup>10</sup> Sir Walter L. Mack, Jr., *Passion for your Kingdom Purpose* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison Press, 2004), 17.

the founders of the church. The researcher intended to also reveal that God was not pleased with this form of ecclesiastical exclusion. As previously stated in Bishop Hanson's article, "While an individual person (generally the pastor) can move a system, the inclusion of skilled, committed and equipped lay leadership from the beginning will result in more change, more ownership of the outcomes by the whole congregation, and a wider range of gifts being utilized for leadership."<sup>11</sup> Congregations that utilize only pastoral leadership in the change process also risk regressing when the pastor moves to another ministry. It is the strength of lay leadership, combined with empowering pastoral leadership, which will be the most effective in congregational change.<sup>12</sup> As one better understood what the Lord required in these circumstances, it was the hope of the researcher that the church would not only receive new members and younger generations but would also reach out to them and share the work of the ministry with them. This sharing of the ministry would result in a greater harvest for the kingdom because Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."<sup>13</sup> With the increase of laborers, the church would be better equipped to carry out the mandate of the Great Commission in reaching out to our neighbors. However, there seemed to be some confusion as to whom the congregants considered their neighbor because of their non-biological attachment.

A reflection on the researcher's life's struggles helps one to understand the need to make room for the outsider but hold on to the original members as well as being

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<sup>11</sup> Hanson, *Renewing Congregations—Change Factor, 1*.

<sup>12</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ECLA.ORG, *Renewing Congregations-Change Factors, The Three Key Factors in Transformation into Dynamic Ministry*, <http://www.elca.org/outreach/renew/changefactors.html>, (Accessed 24 November 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 9:37 KJV

inclusive on all levels. Many times, the researcher felt like an outsider and sought out the help of others. Nevertheless, it was a constant reminder that God was her provider.

Today, the researcher feels the congregants must be reminded that the church is a vehicle to provide all God's children with his word as an avenue of renewal and survival. The researcher's own life struggles reflect some of the problems congregants are facing today.

The researcher's mother was an absentee parent and she grew up without her mother. As a result, she had to care for and essentially raise her siblings rather than attend school and acquire her education. Consequently, the great embarrassment of her mother's conduct later caused her to demand educational excellence even though the same struggles of a double life of care for siblings and excellence in education became her lot. The researcher's mother worked outside of the home and most of the time out of the city, which caused the absenteeism on her part. The refusal on the part of her stepfather to care for his stepchildren caused her mother to have to work and take care of them, which caused her to be absent in order to make a living for her family. The researcher lived in constant fear of her stepfather who rarely exhibited signs of love and care usually afforded to children. Eventually, the researcher's Aunt Amy (her mother's sister) came to assist as a surrogate while her mother traveled and worked.

As the eldest of six children born in Lincolnton, North Carolina, the researcher's earliest memories of God were through her Aunt Amy and her grandmother who prayed constantly for all of the children. Upon reaching the age of twelve, the researcher had the opportunity to spend time with Aunt Amy and her grandmother and observe their spiritual life of prayer, study of the Bible and Sunday worship. It was not until this time in her life that she was introduced to God. This was in fact the first spiritual watershed



moment of her existence, which she refers to as “a grace gift on bonus time.” The researcher continues to evolve in her spiritual pilgrimage as a caterpillar develops into a butterfly.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and during the time the researcher attended school, the public schools located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina were segregated. The first six years of the researcher’s formal education were spent at Woodland Avenue Elementary School. Upon entering the seventh grade, the transitory nature of the researcher began and it continues until this very day. The researcher’s family moved to Highland Avenue where they shared the residence with one of her stepfather’s friends. The researcher was transferred to the Fourteenth Street School to continue her education through the eighth grade. At the Fourteenth Street School, little did the researcher know that her life would intersect with Mrs. Hooper, her Social Studies teacher who (in addition to Aunt Amy and her grandmother) would become a very influential person in her life.

During those years at the Fourteenth Street School, the stress of maintaining excellence in school and dealing with the absence of her mother as well as the abusive conduct by her stepfather resulted in what doctors later diagnosed as a nervous breakdown. Along with all of the other unfortunate events in her life, what little bit of self-esteem the researcher possessed became diminished. Upon graduating from the eighth grade and entering the ninth grade, the researcher entered Atkins High school and completed the tenth grade where she met the young man who she thought would complete her life. A year later, with her mother’s permission, they married and took off to the armed services. After completing three years of duty, they returned to the North Carolina from Anchorage, Alaska and the marriage was dissolved by divorce.

The years that followed were difficult for the researcher as she met another man by the name of [REDACTED] who would become the negative catalyst for the researcher's life spiraling out of control. At the age of twenty-one, the first of her four children was born. The researcher named her first daughter Charlette after her father. During the next two years, two more daughters were born, Carolyn and Linda. However, this relationship was wrought with physical, emotional and sexual abuse to the point that the researcher had to resort to escaping with her children under the cloak of darkness. She moved to Baltimore where Aunt Amy took in her family of four.

The years that followed were definitive in the development of the researcher. It was during those years that she met yet another man but one who was very different from the other two. He encouraged her development educationally as well as emotionally. It was during those years that she began to attend church again and entered school to complete her high school education by enrolling in a General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) program. She then became pregnant with her fourth child who was to be her son named Michael. When Michael was born, life was moved in the right direction so things were a little easier.

During the years that followed, the researcher acquired her high school diploma through the G.E.D. program while working a full-time job and raising her children with the assistance of Aunt Amy. However, one year after that accomplishment, Aunt Amy passed away and the researcher was again on her own. This began another episode in the continuing tragedy of her life. Since Aunt Amy had deposited so much into her life and exposed her to so much, the loss was devastating. Consequently, the researcher resorted to drugs and alcohol searching to find some meaning in life, but found these vices were

more destructive than meaningful. Although she had experienced many losses, it became apparent that the grace and mercies of God were also present in her life.

The following years marked the time of transition as well as growth for her family in spite of the dysfunctional nature of her existence. Her children, one after the other, completed their high school education and their individual adult lives began. At last, the researcher saw the opportunity to find some meaning in her seemingly meaningless life.

Surprisingly, one day, one of the researcher's drinking friends invited her to visit different churches and it was this initial invitation that began the reentry into church life again. The various churches visited proved to be unappealing until that God ordained Sunday when the researcher visited Bethel AME Church. This was the last church visit that she needed. There was no need to do any more visiting because the researcher had found her home. God directed her on the second Sunday through prayer to become a part of that church, where today she remains a member.

During the subsequent years, the researcher became fully involved in the life of the church. As she continued to grow spiritually, the researcher began to feel the pull to work in ministry. Several years later, she heard the call of God and knew that God had called her to serve in ministry. She was surprised by the call to ministry and struggled with the call to preach because of her prior lifestyle along with her former teaching that women were not called to preach.

However, the next few years would mark the beginning of the researcher's educational pursuits starting with the pursuit of an undergraduate degree in Sociology. Yet another change occurred in her life when she was summoned back to North Carolina because of the illness of her mother. Upon arriving in North Carolina, she joined St.

James AME Church and completed five years of ministerial training while in attendance. Subsequently, she was ordained an Itinerant Elder and during the same period, she founded the AME Church in Asheboro, North Carolina.

The next few years would mark her calling to the pastorate of three churches while pursuing a Master of Divinity Degree along with working a full-time job. Finally, in 2004, she completed her Master of Divinity degree from Shaw University.

From 1985 to the present, the researcher successfully completed or experienced great accomplishment with each of the eight different assignments throughout the years of her ministry. At each of the churches she served as pastor, she was charged by the active Bishop to restore a church that found itself spiritually and physically disjointed. The researcher's resume of pastoral assignments was an inspiring testament that she became an ever-evolving female called to minister to various congregations bearing the scars of the mismanagement of previous administrations. During those times of turmoil and unrest in ministry, she had to learn to put her trust in God and not in others.

Today, her current context of ministry finds her the shepherd of yet another disjointed congregation where she has been led to: a) own the task to investigate and describe how to introduce and manage a system of multiple innovations, and b) provide leadership strategies designed to maximize each parishioner's capacity for and willingness to change as she attempts to bridge the gap between the new generation and the old generation.

Thus, the researcher has developed a keen interest in the development of a model of ministry to introduce change in a rural AME Church setting. In her estimation, this may be directly correlated to significant incidences of transformation that formed her life.

Specifically, not letting the negative experiences in her life keep her stuck there, but allowing God to use those occurrences to mold and make her instead of breaking her. She realized that transformation had to occur within her first in order for change to take place without. Furthermore, the researcher has benefited from the work of the Holy Spirit in her own life. She observed that He guided her to Bethel AME Church where the spiritual process initially began with her aunt and grandmother who took root and guided her at a critical time in her spiritual development.

The formulation of this ministry project stems from the reflections detailed in this chapter as the researcher observed the hand of God at work in her life. It is the desire of the researcher that the experiences and knowledge gained through life experiences thus far will provide a basis to support others as they seek to fulfill the will of God in their lives.

### **The Context**

The Clover Garden AME Church located in Burlington, North Carolina dates back to 1880 when it was started in one of the homes of a community resident.<sup>14</sup> Sometime later, the pioneers began to worship under a “Brush Arbor.” At that time, several of the community ancestors who were not pastoring a charge, set out to help establish the present-day church. Families engaged in prayer meetings and enjoyed an occasional sermon delivered by Rev. J. O. Foster in a makeshift structure. Later, the group decided to purchase land to build a better place of worship. It was during the summer of 1890 when the crimson clover was in full bloom that the acquisition was

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<sup>14</sup> Clover Garden A.M.E. Church, *Church History Records* retrieved on December 9, 2006.

made. The original deed, signed by Robert Ireland and Joe Madkins, is visible today on the church records.<sup>15</sup>

As the members walked through the plush, green, clover and flower-filled grass ever thankful for the blessing of the land purchase, they discussed names for the church that would eventually occupy the site. Someone pondered aloud, "What shall we call this church that is about to come into being?" Brother John C. Harvey uttered the words, "Clover Garden." After a brief discussion and consideration, a group of dedicated members readily accepted the name for the church.

In an interview with one of the members, it was revealed that the community was named Clover Garden prior to the church assuming the same name. The same men labored faithfully to complete the first frame church in 1899. A second frame church was built around 1913 and the present brick structure was erected in 1965, with renovations and additions made in the early 1970's. It is a beautiful structure with a wide-open altar area and a small balcony that gives great flexibility for worship. The church sits on two acres of land that adjoins three and a half acres where the community cemetery is situated. The listed value of the sanctuary is \$248,000, although the building is insured for the more believable amount of \$460,129 while there are some structural improvements that are not included in the listed value amount. The parsonage of the church sits on another one and a half acres immediately adjacent to the cemetery. There is also another acre of land across the highway from the church that is used for additional overflow parking.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The 125-year-old church is physically located in the rural section of Burlington, North Carolina. The majority of the members live in the immediate community within 2-6 miles of the church in zip code 27217. The remaining members are dispersed all over Alamance County with a few families from Greensboro, North Carolina and one family from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The church has 175 members on the roll with only 100 active members, of which thirty are children. As the church experiences a gradual growth of new members from outside of the immediate surroundings of the church, it has become necessary for the ministry to redirect its ministry's vision.

In an attempt to obtain a glimpse of the dominant membership of the context church, the researcher conducted a survey on November 16, 2005 of 175 members who were 18 years of age and older. The results of the poll would also serve as an indicator of the demographics of the surrounding community and identify what services the church could offer to a community beset with a steadily rising unemployment rate due to multiple layoffs in the textile industry.

The findings are compiled from a survey presented to the congregation and represent a sample of the African-American congregation. As a result, 60% are between the ages 18-55, while 17% of the members are 65 or older, 80% are female and 20% of the congregation are male. While 75% of the congregation are married; 15% are single and have never been married and 10% are widowed. Although 75% of the congregants are married, 45% of the entire congregation only earn between \$10,000 and \$20,000 annually, while 33% earn \$10, 000 and below. A very small percentage of 2% earn between \$35,000-\$50,000 annually. Twenty percent are unemployed. The dire financial status may be attributed to the fact that, although over 80% have earned at least a high

school diploma, a mere 10% have earned Bachelor's Degrees and 10% Masters Degrees, in addition to the cost of living in North Carolina.

Since the church's property sits in Alamance County, it is helpful to look at the demographic data for the county as well:<sup>16</sup>

- Total population in Burlington, North Carolina is 44,917
- Total population in Alamance County is 130,800
- Median age for Burlington, NC is 36.5; Alamance County is 36.3
- Median household Income for Burlington, NC—\$26,500
- Median household Income for Alamance County—\$39,168
- High School Education—70% Burlington, NC; 31.2% Alamance County
- Bachelor's Degree—15.5% Burlington, NC; 13.8% Alamance County

The Clover Garden AME Church is blessed to be composed of congregants whose ministry is well known for its strong foundation of Bible teaching and Bible believing coupled with its strong ability to attract people into its ministry. The members exhibit strong family values and are a family conscious church. The researcher attributes these characteristics to the fact that the church is made up of approximately three to four families related either biologically or by marriage. The official leadership has not changed much in the last ten to fifteen years, which is an area of the researcher's concern. As a result, the core leadership of the church centers on a few families who are very influential in most matters pertaining to the growth of the church.

The Clover Garden Church has a talented pool of human resources. There are six ministers on the ministerial staff with three ordained and the remaining three in training.

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<sup>16</sup> "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2000, Geographic Area: Alamance County, North Carolina" Table TP-1, <http://censtats.census.gov/data/nc05037001>, (Accessed 16 December 2006).



Of the three ordained, only the pastor is an ordained elder while the remaining three are local deacons who serve the ministry. The mission and vision of the church is clearly stated, but the ministry is quite limited and in need of improvement. The mission statement is, "To be light for those in darkness, safety for those in storms, that all might know Jesus."

### **The Synergy**

Although the Clover Garden AME Church has a talented pool of resources, including a ministerial staff that has six members, the three local Deacons are over sixty-five years of age and in debilitating health. This makes for limited and outdated performance on their part. Consequently, the majority of the church's ministry has been placed in the hands of the pastor. Therefore, the need to connect the church's resources with the needs of the congregation as well as the community is limited at best. Additionally, while the church has the potential to draw people to the ministry, over the years the assimilation and retention of new members has increasingly declined and become a problem for the church and its leadership.

Disengagement is observed in the life of the church as it relates to the involvement of ministry on the part of members of the Pre-Boomers born prior to 1946, the Boomer generation born 1946 to 1964,<sup>17</sup> the X generation born from 1965 to 1980,<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (San Francisco: Jossey and Bass A Wiley Company, 2002), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

and the older generation born before 1927 referred to as the Senior Generation by Whitesel and Hunter.<sup>19</sup> The Boomer generation is troubling at least for this researcher.

During the researcher's many discussions with the context associates, several revelations were brought to light as to the possible causes for the observed disconnection. It was concluded that so many members of the congregation between the ages of 30-60 experienced detachment to the ministry, which led to the feeling of isolation and resentment toward the leadership. Some possible causes of the detachment that were discussed included the facts that: a) certain generations had not been asked to become part of the leadership and had a false sense of who could be on the leadership team; b) individual ministries were never identified and explained; and c) the congregation as a whole was never taught that everyone has gifts to be used as a part of the church's ministry.

One associate stated that many members have said, "The same people are always doing everything and running the church and we just do not feel as if we are even a part of the church until they need our money." It was also noted by several of the other context associates that there was a need for leadership training because this had never occurred and, after many years serving on the leading boards of the church, many did not really know what their responsibilities were. It was also suggested by the context associates that this was an area of great need within the context. The researcher agreed with the context associates that there needed to be a rediscovery of the rules and use of the Doctrine and Discipline of the A.M.E. Church. Discussions indicated that the context associates thought that any project addressing these issues along with appointing junior

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<sup>19</sup> Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generations Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 21.

boards to include members of the younger generations had the potential to affect the ministry and bring about change. This change would result in a spirit of inclusiveness and allow for growth and shared ministry with all members and clergy working together.

The union of these ministry needs and the interest of this researcher became evident as the researcher reflected on her life and educational experiences. It became apparent that the researcher's spiritual and life journey had been marked by critical support mechanisms that emerged at times when needed most and enabled the researcher to stay on course. This was evident even as she reflected on her surrogate mother in the person of her Aunt Amy, who made sure that she attended Sunday school and worship services every Sunday. During these times, the researcher had many questions about God, who He was and what role He should or would play in her life.

The researcher recollected being very impressed with the spiritual life of her aunt, who seemed to have a committed relationship to her faith. Aunt Amy modeled the type of relationship with God that the researcher longed for, but did not have. Although at that time the researcher had accepted Jesus Christ as her personal savior, she did not really understand what it meant to be in relationship. It is the researcher's belief that, during those years, the Lord modeled relationship and commitment to God through her aunt and even through the observation of her life committed for His service.

In like manner, as the researcher considered the times of loss, turmoil and trauma in her life, she observed a critical skill that was necessary for survival in ministry. Namely, that skill was the ability to trust and re-engage in meaningful relationships. The researcher observed that she had been able to adapt that skill through deep spiritual experiences of healing that have taken place at critical times in her life. It is through those

experiences that the researcher has been able to consistently re-engage even in moments of loss or challenge. The researcher also attributed this to the biblical foundational teaching she received.

The educational journey of the researcher also lends itself to spiritual care and group spiritual formation. The researcher observes that this training has increased her sensitivity to the needs of leaders and has developed into a particular concern for enabling and enhancing leadership development in the process of introducing change in the church setting. Group spiritual formation speaks to the dynamics that enable a group to develop its own identity, thus enabling its participants to develop a kinship that transcends the group. This element is crucial to the development of the model to introduce change processes that will engage the congregants in becoming change agents that will allow for growth and inclusion on all levels. The researcher hypothesizes that by introducing *A Transformational Model Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and Empowering Congregations in a Rural AME Church Setting* in Clover Garden Church that change will be made possible. As a result, the congregation will then recognize what changes need to take place with respect to congregational organization in order for the church to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and close the generational gap that will allow for transformation and empowerment.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

It has been said, “Reading is one of the most profitable of all intellectual activities. In reading, ideas and facts go from one brain to another through the printed page.”<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader a narrative of the literature related to this model in ministry. In preparation for the formulation of this ministry project, the researcher realized that it would be imperative to grasp the ideas and facts from several voices pertaining to aspects of *Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations*. There is a wide and diverse body of work pertaining to the development of congregational change and the various topics that will be covered in this ministry model. This segment will serve to highlight some of the voices in the field, as well as look closely at the written word on Black theology and its application to this model.

The needs and concerns of today’s society are so great that clergy and laypersons must form a team to properly address the issues at hand. *Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry* was an important first read in preparation for this ministry researcher to produce a model. The authors Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck joined to produce a model that will bring about increased involvement and empowerment of laypersons in the church. These authors contend that clergy are responsible for creating the climate and provide opportunities for training to enable lay persons to assume a greater role in the ministry process. This writer agrees with the

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy J. Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 51.

authors' view that it is God's mission to get the world to understand who God is and God's love for the world and that mission is to be fulfilled through the church's ministry. God's people are to minister in God's name to the hurts and needs of their community. Clergy and laity must work together to form a ministry in the local church that addresses the particular needs of the community it serves.<sup>2</sup>

Lindgren and Shawchuck offer some helpful ways to increase lay-clergy teamwork in ministry. They include: (a) the church's ministry must be alive spiritually and provide many contexts within which persons may become open and sensitive to God's presence. This can be accomplished through worship, fellowship, Bible study, group sharing, and discussion as well as ministering to the personal needs of others; (b) the church must seek to identify the personal needs, goals, and abilities of members and relate them to the church's goals and activities. People will be more likely to commit to what is important and of interest to them; (c) The lay people, especially the younger generation, must be involved from the outset in deciding what is to go on in the life of the church, including outreach ministry. This helps to provide respect and trust with the lay-clergy team; (d) Clergy have a specific role in empowering the lay-clergy team. The pastor's leadership style will serve to enhance or block the empowerment of lay involvement; and (e) the church must develop a comprehensive ongoing personnel plan for identifying, recruiting, training, and supporting laypersons as church leaders.<sup>3</sup>

Lindgren and Shawchuck have developed a wonderful model that will go a long way in helping the writer to deal with the problems that seek to immobilize the Clover Garden

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<sup>2</sup> Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck, *Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry* (Leith, ND: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1988), 10-18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

AME Church. It is obvious that these authors have spent much time investigating those elements that slow down a church's effectiveness in doing the work of the ministry. The writer was aware of each of these areas of concern mentioned in this model; however, it is now seen that the writer has fallen short in providing Clover Garden with a comprehensive ongoing plan to address these immobilizing issues. Utilizing the techniques set down in this model will greatly assist in adjusting the leadership style as Clover Garden AME Church moves to a more mobilized ministry that meets real needs. Getting people involved from the outset in the decision-making process is a must if this model is to work. The writer is thankful for the tools of assessment and activation of a lay-clergy team in the work of the ministry by these writers.

Developing relevant community ministry is another task that is facing the rural church in its efforts to mobilize the congregation.

*Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry* is a wonderful model formulated by author, Carl S. Dudley revealing the basic steps for performing community ministry.<sup>4</sup> In *Basic Steps*, the author suggests that ministries of compassion and justice will not come to be without people caring enough to act. No matter how much pressure through preaching or training for organizational procedure we give the congregation, we cannot make people love and include one another. Dudley suggests that when we see pain and hardship on faces that we know, it triggers sensitivity in Christians. As one or two members care and then share that caring with other members, it is the development of

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<sup>4</sup> Carl S. Dudley, *Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry* (Washington DC: The Alban Institute, 1991), xii.

ministry beyond our own concerns.<sup>5</sup> This is one of the changes the writer desires for Clover Garden AME Church.

Dudley contends that there are three areas that must be addressed in order to build a solid foundation for the church's ministry. First, there is the area of your church's social context. This is a picture of the place and people that live all around churches as well as their lifestyles and available community resources. The second area is that of congregational identity.<sup>6</sup> This will include the faith, history, and personality of the church. This will give you a picture of the values and commitments that flavor the church's response to ministry needs. The third area of concern is that of organization.<sup>7</sup> This will give you a picture of the resources and leaders that make it possible for your ministry to respond in the context of the church's identity. Although some churches concentrate on only one of these aspects at a time, all three elements are interdependent and interactive and must happen at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

This model by Dudley is an excellent presentation of the basic steps for mobilizing a congregation for ministry. Most of his work is related to the tools needed to get things in place. This writer wishes to have been able to spend a little more time on the theological and biblical foundations for pursuing this model for ministry. This would have been very helpful in the struggle to formulate a theological and biblical basis for the project at Clover Garden AME Church. Although this model was not designed for the rural church, it is felt that the techniques easily applied to the struggle the researcher was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



having with the ministry focus context in the overall research document. The writer greatly benefited from the step-by-step details given in this model. This model also served to validate a concern of the writer that, until a congregation has a burden for doing the work of the ministry, all the preaching and teaching in the world will not mobilize them as a congregation.

*The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* confirms that it is easy to lose a ministry focus when there is no real purpose for doing what you do.<sup>9</sup> Rick Warren has presented a model for what he terms “The Purpose Driven Church.” The author suggests that every church is driven by something. Those driving forces could be tradition, finances, programs, personalities, events, seekers, and even buildings themselves. The author further contends that this model will shift the focus away from church building programs to emphasizing a people-building process.<sup>10</sup>

Rick Warren’s model suggests that, in order to reach out to its community, the church must first of all identify its target in order to be effective and not to be exclusive. The author suggests that we must personalize our target by creating a composite profile of the persons we are trying to reach with our ministry.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, this model suggests that we must know whom our church can best reach.<sup>12</sup> The author suggests that the easiest people for you to reach are those who are most like you. In other words you will attract who you are, not who you want. The question is raised concerning a church that does not match the community where it is located. This model suggests that the church

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<sup>9</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 75-83.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 173.

should be built on its strengths and should not try to be something it is not. Thirdly, this model suggests that a major key to reaching your community is developing your strategy.<sup>13</sup> This model further suggests allowing a target to determine your approach. The author contends that one must go where the fish are biting. The church must remember that the gospel is communicated in the terms of the culture in which it is presented.<sup>14</sup>

This purpose driven church model was very helpful to this writer in understanding the need to form a model in ministry that is relevant to the community in which you wish to do ministry. Because this model is geared toward a more balanced and focused ministry, it offers much needed help for mobilizing a congregation. In Warren's book, the writer would have liked to see him explore how one can theologically be exclusive and inclusive at the same time. Although this model was not designed for the rural church in particular, it gives some very valuable and needed assistance for mobilizing any congregation for ministry.

In *The Church as Community: Cultivating a Ministry of Care and Compassion*, Gregory M. Fuller presented some helpful insights in addressing what he calls the "crisis of separation" which seeks to destroy a congregation from within.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately the local church has struggled with internal conflict since its inception. However, this struggle from within does not have to destroy and immobilize the congregation and its ministry. In his document, he addresses the problem of disunity and lack of care and compassion among the members of a local African American congregation. He further

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 185-186.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 173-196.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory M. Fuller, "The Church as Community: Cultivating a Ministry of Care and Compassion" (D. Min. Thesis, United Theological Seminary, 1996), v-vii.

suggests that this separation hinders the congregation's ability to minister to and care for persons who are suffering.<sup>16</sup>

Fuller suggests that his contextual research revealed that his congregation was a predominately maintenance-oriented church.<sup>17</sup> The members came into the community to worship and left without concern for the people who lived there. He further indicates that the members of the church had very little fellowship with each other. Fuller addressed the issue with a three-fold approach. In phase one of his approach a support group was established within the congregation.<sup>18</sup> He picked members who had already demonstrated a love and compassion for people. These persons also possessed the necessary gifts and talents needed for the task. The mission of this group was to assist persons in need as well as enhance a ministering spirit among the members of the congregation. In phase two, Fuller used the preaching of a series of sermons on community care and compassion as a means of calling attention to social concerns and unifying the congregation.<sup>19</sup> Phase three consisted of a workshop to teach and reinforce the church's involvement as the community of faith.<sup>20</sup> Fuller concluded that the members acknowledged a change in the attitudes and actions of the congregation.<sup>21</sup>

In *Integrating Newcomers into Rurban Congregations: a Case Study in North Branch, Michigan*, the author relates that integrating newcomers into an existing

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 79-154.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

congregation is an ongoing problem for most rural congregations.<sup>22</sup> Roger Franklin Gedcke presents a case study of the church he served which struggled with this problem. Gedcke studied the values of the church as well as the members. The context is best described as a family-oriented congregation with strong traditional rural values. This congregation was not seeking new members, but found itself surrounded by newcomers who were looking for something fresh and new. Many of the newcomers were from the urban community. Gedcke refers to this mixture of urban and rural cultures as rurban. The new growth created a fear in this long established community that they were about to become something very different from what they were comfortable with. The author developed strategies for integrating newcomers into the congregation. The project included a seven session adult membership and reaffirmation class.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the membership session, Gedcke also organized a council of Caring Members who help usher new members through their first three months with the new congregation. The author concluded that the model was successful.<sup>24</sup>

Ron Klassen and John Koessler contend that the small town and rural congregations have often sold themselves short by apologizing for their size and location. They have compiled a study of the small town church and its struggle for significance.

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<sup>22</sup> Roger Franklin Gedcke, "Integration Newcomers Into Rurban Congregations: a Case Study in North Branch, Michigan" (D. Min. Thesis, United Theological Seminary, 1991), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The authors expose several myths that are causing many small town churches to feel that only big city churches can have successful ministries.<sup>25</sup>

Our culture seems to be stuck on the notion that significant church growth has to do with numbers and size. The authors attempt to enlarge our understanding of growth to include quality growth in spiritual maturity as opposed to just numerical growth. Real growth will be seen in the people's ability to share with others. Klassen and Koessler's research recommends the use of a membership survey to find out what members are doing and to determine what church members would like to do. A survey conducted by the authors at their church revealed that 59 percent of the members wanted to continue their current areas of ministry, 8 percent wanted to change to an area where they felt more qualified, and 20 percent wanted to develop skills in areas where they did not feel qualified.<sup>26</sup>

This study also provides readers with an understanding of a new frontier known as *Rurban*.<sup>27</sup> This is characterized by the desire of many urbanites to leave the noise and hubbub of the city in search of a more relaxed small-town setting. This research discusses a small town rural church that had remained the same while the community around it continued to change.<sup>28</sup> This church loved its heritage and did not want to change, but soon saw the need to extend their ministry to everyone in the community, rather than one segment. Before long, there were more newcomers than original members. Some of the

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<sup>25</sup> Ron Klassen and John Koessler, *No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 13-22.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-26.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

newcomers, who were not related to any of the families, were soon moved into prominent ministry roles. It wasn't long before the two cultures were clashing. The pastor used seminars and sermons to help the congregation focus on the person and work of Christ, thus enabling each group to develop a respect for the other. The study revealed that the two cultures successfully blended and now worship side by side and opened the door to renewed growth in numbers as well as spiritual maturity.<sup>29</sup>

Klassen and Koessler suggest that growing urban communities provide new opportunities for ministry. This new and changing community will need adventurous pastors who are willing to work in uncharted waters with bi-cultural conflict and growth. This is a trend that will not soon go away.<sup>30</sup> Although this study was not written from an African-American perspective, this work reached across racial and cultural lines thus providing invaluable assistance to those in need of the research revealed in this document.

In *An Unstoppable Force*, author Erwin Raphael McManus contended that change was rarely taught or extracted from the Scriptures, the Scriptures are a document about change.<sup>31</sup> He states you can never properly understand biblical theology without accepting that change is one of the most significant dynamics that God instigates in the church.<sup>32</sup> The principle that resonated with this researcher is as McManus reminds us, we serve the changeless God of change. God is not satisfied with the status quo. He reminds

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 51-55.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>31</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 2001), 80.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

us that the implications of change begin on a personal level always extend to the whole of the people of God.<sup>33</sup>

*If It Could Happen Here: Turning the Small-Membership Church Around* is an informative book where Jeff Patton describes six “levers” (as he terms them) prayer, clear mission, indigenous worship, growth groups, meaningful membership, and lay pastoring that combine to make a difference in a small church. It resonated with this writer because the author talks about stories of transformations that occurred during the rebirth of a church. The transformation occurred as a result of the congregations focusing on the center of the gospel and which should happen in every true congregation of faith-transformed lives.<sup>34</sup> Clover Garden is at the point of becoming a dead church if there is not an immediate turn around and this book was an inspiration to the writer because it spoke to the local context situation.

Carroll and Roof illustrate the huge impact that generational differences have on the local churches by addressing the important intersection existing between congregational structure and generational conflict in their collaborative work, *Bridging Divided Worlds*. Looking closely at significant historical events, sociological data, and anecdotes, they provide an explanation of how we’ve reached the generational diversity that is prevalent in the rural AME churches. The authors identify 3 types of congregations and provide commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of each. This book was most helpful in leading to the discovery of ways to bridge the gaps and connect the different

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>34</sup> Jeff Patton, *If It Could Happen Here: Turning the Small Membership Church Around* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 8.

worlds that are the comfort ones of the various congregants and create a stronger, vibrant and rich religious community.<sup>35</sup>

Whitesel's and Hunt's book, *A House Divided*, uses cross culture evangelism and classical principles with a contemporary practice to counter congregational stagnation and membership decline that is the result of a one size fits all approach to ministry and worship. The various generational cohorts are defined and the main characteristic differences between the three major groups presented in the local church are outlined and explained. The authors offer a creative but specific seven-step strategy for developing and implementing a tri-generational church.<sup>36</sup> This book resonated with the researcher because the tri-generational model is the needed component for the Clover Garden AME Church setting.

The book *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years*, provides an intimate look at the struggles African Americans had establishing spiritual communities in the harsh world of slavery in the American colonies.<sup>37</sup> Mitchell provides information that the first African American churches did not just organize; they labored hard, long, and sacrificed to form a meaningful, independent faith. Mitchell's insight takes readers inside this process of development.<sup>38</sup> *Black Church Beginnings* also gathers the prophetic fragments of African American church history into a tight synthesis,

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<sup>35</sup> Jackson Carroll and Wade Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (San Francisco: Jon Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 109, 140, 172.

<sup>36</sup> Bob Whitesel and Kent Hunter, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 121-123.

<sup>37</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2004), back cover.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



challenging narrow nationalist notions that Christianity is a white religion.<sup>39</sup> Mitchell's central argument is that black expressions of faith in the salvific work of Christ cannot be separated from the African religious heritage of those enslaved in the new world.<sup>40</sup> This is an important refrain in black religious historiography.

In his book, *Black Theology of Liberation*, Dwight Hopkins argues that the essence and genesis of Black Theology began during the slavery period and continued into the 1950s and 1960s. Hopkins maintains that the only difference is between the composition and perspectives of the first and second generations of black theologians. The first generation was all men who advocated a faith revealed in politics (James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts) and a faith based in black culture (Gayraud Wilmore and Charles Long). The second generation, consisting of men and women, broadened the scope of black liberation that critiqued popular culture, poor folk, afrocentricity, and global interconnections. The latter challenged the claims of Black Theology's liberation, and expanded its scope to include interdisciplinary studies and Womanist Theology. In Hopkins' view, Black Theology is a prophetic theology of liberation. The unique contribution of Black Theology is discovering the core message of personal and structural liberation in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, and connecting this message with God's presence in African American's movement for justice. For Hopkins, the primary question is "What does it mean to be black and Christian?" The answer offered is that to be black and Christian means to have both faith and practice, which he argues means experiencing God as a presence and reality of liberation, at least in the African American

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Community.<sup>41</sup> This writer states that the purpose of a Black Theology of liberation is to work with the church, including all generations and the community, seeing God's will of liberation through Jesus Christ as similar to black folk's attempts at liberation. Then and only then, will the generation gap be bridged and the empowerment of the congregation will be established.

James Cone's contribution to Black Theology has been incalculable. His book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, was the first systematic work produced in the contemporary black theological movement. It established the credibility of the movement and opened the door for the works of other seminary professors. Cone argues that theology is a rational study of the being of God in the world. He proposes that in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, that being of God relates the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ. For Cone, the sole reason for the existence of theology is to put into ordered speech the meaning of God's activity in the world, so that the oppressed will recognize that their inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the gospel but also is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, Black Theology is the voice and vehicle that articulates the pain, injustice, and quest for liberation for oppressed African Americans. Cone maintains that Black Theology shuns all abstract principles dealing with what is the "right and wrong; course of action. There is only one principle, which guides the thinking and action of Black Theology: an unqualified commitment to the Black Community as that community seeks to define its existence in the light of God's liberating work in the world."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 192-200.

<sup>42</sup> James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1970), 17-35.

In *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue*, Dwight Hopkins draws on slave narratives found in forty-one volumes of interviews and one hundred autobiographies by former slaves. These contributors explore how enslaved African Americans received the often-oppressive faith of their masters but transformed it into a gospel of liberation. In this classic work, they demonstrate how an authentic Black Theology of liberation today must listen to the Divine Spirit that once fed, and continues to, feed the black religious experience. The second edition includes three additional provocative essays contributors including Will Coleman, M. Shawn Copeland, George C. L. Cummings, David Emmanuel Goatley, Joan Martin, and Cheryl J. Sanders.<sup>43</sup>

Julian Kunnie, in *Models of Black Theology: Issues in Class, Culture, and Gender*, is geared toward bridging the chasm between black experiences in the United States and South Africa. Black people in the United States went out to embrace Africa and recover their long lost African heritage in an intentional and profound way, not in a vague and superficial manner. This dimension is crucial in addressing the crisis of black identity experience in America.<sup>44</sup> In order to reflect on one's African heritage, as well as glean some ideas in bridging the generational gap in the ministry context, this book was a definite read for the writer.

Carlyle Fielding Stewart, in *God, Being and Liberation: A Comparative Analysis of the Theologies and Ethics of James H. Cone and Howard Thurman*, seeks to understand the thinking of liberation from these two men. The result is a brilliant analysis

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<sup>43</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins and George C. L. Cummings, eds., *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narrative* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) Back Cover.

<sup>44</sup> Julian Kunnie, *Models of Black Theology : Issues In Class, Culture and Gender* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 4.

of the internal and external dimensions of the liberation process. Stewart states, “God’s revolution takes place in the soul of the individual as well as the external dimensions of the liberation process. God frees us from ourselves and society for true freedom must contain aspects of both realities.”<sup>45</sup>

Rev. Samuel White says, “Stewart believes the material and spiritual realities are two sides to the same coin. He goes on to say God liberates us from the shackles of sin as well as politico-economic injustice. God is concerned about the poverty of the soul and body. This indispensable truth might have been said or written elsewhere but never as thoroughly and clearly as in *God, Being and Liberation*.”<sup>46</sup> This book resonated with the writer because Stewart affirmed the belief that any process that impedes the growth of individuals toward wholeness and consummation of being is structurally oppressive. This researcher believes that exclusion hinders the growth of members in ministry.

## SUMMARY

The literature review was designed to guide the reader in considering the research that framed the Ministry Project. It is also designed to provide the researcher with a solid understanding of congregations’ resistance to change. This literature review shows effective ministry components that are capable of encouraging congregants to become agents of change given the critical role of Christian leadership in the Ministry Project. It also shows the theological rationale structuring, developing and undertaking with this

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<sup>45</sup> Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *God, Being and Liberation: A Comparative Analysis of the Theologies and Ethics of James H. Cone and Howard Thurman* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1989), xv.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., xvi.

Ministry Project. The following is a historical, biblical and theological analysis of this problem, which attempts to create an effective and compassionate ministry for an area desperately in need of constructive and positive intervention.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The theoretical foundation of the researcher's Peer Group's focus is Preaching and Leadership. It is based on the power of the word (preaching) and the power of the deed (leadership). This ministry focus recognizes that preaching and leadership go hand in hand and are critical to seeing lives change or flourish through the proclamation of God's word, resulting in the production of servant leaders in the church. The focus of leadership is important and the researcher believes that there is a great decline in the morality of our current leadership in all areas of our society, including African American blacks.

This decline in ethics is routinely reflected in the media as well as throughout our local communities. The national headlines frequently broadcast the "fall from grace" of chief executives in Corporate America, high-ranking elected officials on Capitol Hill, and successful Christian leaders. The recent death of Kenneth Lay, the Enron CEO found guilty of conspiracy and fraud, serves to remind us of the infamous, systematic corporate scandal.<sup>1</sup> Another case more recent is that of Mark Foley, the Republican Congressman from Florida, who resigned amid allegations of questionable conversations, in particular

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<sup>1</sup> Shaheen Prasha, "Enron Founder Ken Lay Dies," *CNNMoney.com*, (July 5, 2006), [http://money.cnn.com/2006/07/05/news/newsmakers/lay\\_death/index.htm?cnn=yes](http://money.cnn.com/2006/07/05/news/newsmakers/lay_death/index.htm?cnn=yes) (accessed July 2006).

sexually explicit emails and instant messages with former teenage pages.<sup>2</sup> Still another example of moral corruption is that of Ted Arthur Haggard (Pastor Ted), who was led to relinquish his three-year position as president of the National Association of Evangelicals and was ultimately released as senior pastor of New Life Church in Colorado due to his secret liaisons with a male prostitute and purported drug purchases.<sup>3</sup>

In *The Book on Leadership*, the researcher concurs with the author, John MacArthur, that there is a crisis of leadership that faces both the world and the church.<sup>4</sup> MacArthur states, "As these words are being written, the headlines in the secular press are all about leaders in the corporate world who have been guilty of appalling moral negligence."<sup>5</sup> Leadership in the church cannot follow the model of the corporate world. The question then posed is what is the ideal model for church leaders?

Jesus answered this question in a few words in Matthew 20:25-28, when He stated, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave;

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Babington and Jonathan Weisman, "Rep. Foley Quits In Page Scandal," *Washingtonpost.com*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/29/AR2006092901574.html> (accessed September 30, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Alan Cooperman, "Minister Admits to Buying Drugs and Massage," *Washingtonpost.com*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/03/AR2006110301617.html> (accessed November 4, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 2004), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

just as the son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>6</sup>

According to Hans Finzel in his book, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, when it comes to servant leadership there is no better model than that of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> On the night He was betrayed, Jesus showed His followers just how much He loved them. In the book of John, chapter 13, verse 1, “Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”<sup>8</sup> Finzel declares “Jesus now showed them the full extent of His love. At that point Jesus begins to give His final and ultimate demonstration of servant leadership: He washes the disciples’ feet.”<sup>9</sup> According to Christ, then, the truest kind of leadership demands service, sacrifice, and selflessness. Leaders who look to Christ as their Leader and their supreme model of leadership will have servants’ hearts. They will exemplify sacrifice.

But while it is certainly true that leadership demands a servant’s heart, it is by no means the case that everyone with a servant’s heart is a leader. There is far more to leadership than that.

According to Hans Finzel, great leaders challenge people to attempt things they would never try on their own.<sup>10</sup> He goes on to say that great leaders inspire us to go

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 20:25-28 New Revised Standard Version

<sup>7</sup> Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communication Ministries, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> John 13:1

<sup>9</sup> Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, 30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 14.



places we would never go on our own, and to attempt things we never thought we had in us. However, this writer agrees with John C. Maxwell's definition of leadership in his book, *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, that leadership is influence, nothing more, and nothing less.<sup>11</sup> The best kind of leader is someone whose life and character motivates people to follow. The word influence is the best one word definition of leadership. Leaders are people who think and feel to act in certain ways.<sup>12</sup> Neil Wiseman in *Leadership: A Leadership Development Strategy for Church Growth*, defines leadership as "a process, a relationship between two or more persons who depend on each other for the attainment of common goals. Ideally leadership carries satisfaction for both followers and leaders."<sup>13</sup>

The focus of this peer group is significant to the development of this ministry model because it is helpful in integrating new and fresh leadership into the existing leadership that currently consists of members in the age group of 60 years and over. This writer feels it will in turn bring about change in all areas of church life and unless all congregants are allowed to have voice in the ministry, people will begin to feel worthless. According to Stephen R. Covey's *The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, a leadership challenge is to enable persons to inwardly sense his or her innate worth and potential for greatness and to contribute his or her unique talents and passion, in other

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<sup>11</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Finzel, *Empowered Leaders: The Ten Principles of Christian Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1998), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Neil Wiseman, *Leadership: A Leadership Development Strategy for Church Growth* (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 1979), 27.

words, “voice to accomplish the organizations purpose and highest priorities in a principle-centered way.”<sup>14</sup>

It is the position of the researcher that leadership is significant to this doctoral studies project because leaders are the first to catch the vision when introducing change and influence that others later come to voice. This requires good leadership skills since “leadership is not an exclusive club for those who were ‘born with it,’ it is significant that a doctoral studies focus would be on this particular subject because “leadership can be taught.”<sup>15</sup> It is the position of the researcher that, leadership is important to this doctoral studies project as there are individuals who have expressed a desire to serve in leadership positions in the church.

The researcher considers it useful to think of the ministry of a Christian leader as not completely effective until the leader authentically embodies the equipping role of Ephesians 4:12.<sup>16</sup>

Preaching is the second component to this peer group’s focus, and although this ministry model will not directly focus on preaching, there are aspects to the development of introducing change in an AME Church setting that is applicable to it. It has been said that “everything in the New Testament is preaching.”<sup>17</sup> Evidence of this is indicated in the writings of the Acts of the Apostles where most of the book is “taken up with speech

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Free Press 2004), 99.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 4:12

<sup>17</sup> O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 6.

of one sort or another.”<sup>18</sup> “Most cultures in the history of the world have produced great oratory” who were also great leaders; however leadership involves a developmental process.<sup>19</sup> Due to the connectivity of preaching and leadership, and it being the theoretical foundation of this peer group, the researcher gave consideration to both subjects in the development of this ministry model.

Certain preaching principles play a vital role in effective communication; however, for the researcher, leadership principles played the primary role in formulating and implementing the Ministry Project. There are over 850 definitions and attributes of leadership. Yet Dr. Terry Thomas, one of the Peer Group’s mentors, offered the most important understanding of leadership for the leadership for this Ministry Project. In Dr. Thomas’ lecture titled, *An Exploration in the Task of Leadership, 2005*, he offered the following reasons why leadership is vitally important:

- Leadership always makes a difference
- Leadership is always purposeful and powerful
- The difference leadership brings is always intentional
- Leadership adds flavor to bland situations
- Leadership prevents decay
- Leadership has universal implications
- Leadership cannot be ignored
- Leadership is beneficial to all within its province or under its jurisdiction

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12.

- Leadership incarnates what others are yet to envision, but need to embrace
- Leadership allows God's glory to be revealed.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Thomas asserted that the central task of leadership is to imagine a future and move people toward it. Thus, the leader is a risk taker by definition because, based on faith, he or she leads others in purposeful directions, with no proof of eventual success.<sup>21</sup> Bishop Vashti McKenzie adds, "Leadership is the powerful force by which exclusionary paradigms such as racism and sexism may be confronted, challenged, and changed."<sup>22</sup> Dr. Thomas further adds that, "A leader is someone who, out of his/her demonstrated love for and commitment to God, attempts to nurture and empower the people of God to do the will of God and by:

- Being a servant
- Providing Christian influence for Godly change under the unction of the Holy Spirit
- Being a step ahead but not out of touch with the needs of people
- Being accountable
- Being a visionary
- One who leads by example
- One who is willing to endure hardship
- One who is disciplined<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Terry Thomas, "An Exploration in the Task of Leadership" (lecture, Hilton Head Resort, Hilton Head, NC, March 2005), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>22</sup> Vashti McKenzie, *Not Without a Struggle: Leadership for African American Women in Ministry* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1996), xviii.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 14.

Dr. Thomas' qualities of leadership gave the researcher the comfort and confirmation, the courage and conviction, to be the type of risk-taker required by this Ministry Project, i.e. someone who moves forward with no guarantee of eventual success. Dr. Thomas helped the researcher understand that a leader, out of obedience to God and love for God's people, seeks to nurture and empower the people of God to do the will of God. George McCalep, Jr., in his book, *Sin in the House*, states, "Effective leadership can be defined as a person who gets the right things done by the right people at the right time and place. Effective leaders 'major in the majors.' Contrarily, ineffective leaders major in the minors and minor in majors."<sup>24</sup> An effective leader accomplishes the big picture by making sure that the right people handle the details at the right time and place.

The Peer Group also clarified the fact that effective Christian leadership begins with the Leader's own spiritual development. Christian leaders are credible servants, supporters, coaches and partners. The leader has to be connected and tuned into the voice and will of God for his/her ministry. They are God's servants, called to lead and shepherd God's people. George Barna, in his book *The Power of Vision*, provides invaluable guidance for Christian leaders in this pertinent part:

Authentic Christian leaders are people who know that when they are left alone to make decisions, those choices invariably reflect their unregenerate nature. In other words, their choices demonstrate values, beliefs, desires and goals that are not perfectly aligned with the mind and heart of God. But because they are Christian leaders, they know they must pursue God to gain a better perspective on what they ought to do with the resources and opportunities entrusted to them by God.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> George McCalep, *Sin in the House: Ten Crucial Church Problems with Cleansing Solutions* (Lithonia, GA: Orman Press, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 61.

Christ-centered leadership is essential for long-term, effective, and authentic Christian leadership that addresses and ministers to the needs of the people of God. In this ministry context, that means the need for change that reflects inclusiveness in all areas for the sake of growth and meaningful ministry.

The leadership concepts developed in the Peer Group that profoundly have influenced this Ministry Project is Dr. Terry Thomas' lecture: *An Exploration into the Task of Leadership*. In this lecture, his section on the "New Paradigm for Strategic Leadership for the Twenty First Century" harmonized with key elements of the Ministry Project. His advice that Isaiah taught, "God is constantly doing a new thing. Christian leaders must be sensitive to the new things that God is doing,"<sup>26</sup> and his question, "Is our plan for leadership relevant to the needs of our people?"<sup>27</sup> This served as a litmus test for the researcher's Ministry Project. Every component of the Ministry Model was examined for its potential relevancy and impact on the targeted group. Relevance to them became objective number one. This question of relevant leadership led the researcher to the conclusion that a Ministry Project that is not relevant to the real needs of change in the rural church that will foster transformed lives is a useless waste of time and resources.

In another lecture by Dr. Thomas titled, *Mobilizing Your Local Context for Social Change*, he offered a quote from one of the great Christian teachers of the last thirty years, the late Dr. Miles Jerome Jones, former professor of homiletics. Dr. Jones, who served as a mentor to Dr. Thomas and countless others, stated that, "Knowledge is never

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas, *An Exploration in the Task of Leadership*, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

enough to make one embrace the truth.”<sup>28</sup> The researcher agrees. Dr. Jones knew that without Christian leadership, knowledge is never enough to make one embrace the truth. The plight of the rural church’s decline is evident. We are in a time Jeff Patton in his book titled, *If It Could Happen Here: Turning the Small Membership Church Around*, contends that the United States country side is dotted with thousands of small, rural congregations, most of which are struggling merely to survive. High on their institutional agenda is the collection of enough money to keep a pastor around, to care for the aging members, and to keep the doors of the institution open.<sup>29</sup> And this is the present status of this context of ministry. We are in a time of great change, according to Gilbert R. Rendle in his book titled, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*.<sup>30</sup> We are facing changes not only in our congregation, but also in our families, our work places, our government, our schools and the list goes on.<sup>31</sup> Yet the knowledge of this reality has not been enough to mobilize this congregation to make a concerted effort to do likewise. Dr. Thomas provides a definition for mobilization that has become a cornerstone of this Ministry Project. In his words, “A mobilization process is a process by which the congregation is made ready through leadership of a concerned individual to deal with and rectify the social ills and needs of its community.”<sup>32</sup> The Ministry Project’s congregation is a community of people of faith committed to making a

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<sup>28</sup> Terry Thomas, “Mobilizing your Local Context for Social Change” (lecture, Hilton Head Resort, Hilton Head, NC, March 2005), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Jeff Patton, *If It Could Happen Her: Turning the Small Membership Church Around* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2002) 7.

<sup>30</sup> Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1998) 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, “Mobilizing Your Local Context for Social Change,” 4.

difference in the lives of God's people. According to Rendle, in other words, effective Christian leadership is needed to mobilize a congregation (people of faith) and managing change is not just about finding the new spot where you and your congregation are supposed to end up. Rather, it is often more critical to attend to and understand the steps and stages of the transition period that will, in fact, get you to a destination.<sup>33</sup>

Next, the Peer Group sessions helped the researcher to recognize that innovative and creative change is needed to ensure the relevancy of the Ministry Project and its ability to positively alter the perceptions of change in congregations. The need for change and alternative ways to do ministry in the local context is eloquently captured by Donald Phillips in his book, *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership*. In this leadership treatise, Phillips states, "In essence, change is what leadership is all about. Leaders are change-makers, they are masters of change. By helping followers achieve goals, they lead people to where they've never been before. Leaders blaze new trails. They plow new ground. They sail uncharted waters. Leaders are out front."<sup>34</sup> The objective of this Ministry Project is to lead Clover Garden AME Church to where they have never been before.

In addition, the Peer Group also helped the researcher to understand, in the words of Jeff Patton, that "the leadership of many mainline rural congregations, now in their 60s and beyond are looking back, remembering what was and how the "glory days" looked."<sup>35</sup> He goes on to state that the resistance to change coupled with nostalgic

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<sup>33</sup> Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Donald T. Phillips, *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership* (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 82.

<sup>35</sup> Patton, *If It Could Happen Here*, 23.



longings for the past, stalls the forward progress of the church.<sup>36</sup> And that is exactly what is occurring in this researcher's context.

In order for the church to reverse the trend of stalling forward progress, it cannot be afraid to use creative and innovative ways to do ministry. God is able to communicate and implement His divine plan through culturally relevant models of ministry that accomplishes His will. The researcher concludes that the church cannot be influenced by the culture, but in fact, must influence the culture.

Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg in *Becoming a Contagious Christian* states, contagious churches have learned they must communicate to their culture without compromising with their culture.<sup>37</sup> They know if the message of the cross of Christ is ever diluted or hidden then the battle has already been lost. What good is it to learn to speak the language of secular people if we lose our message in the process?<sup>38</sup>

George Barna further contends the church seems afraid to invest in new modes of being the church, breaking free from antiquated models and irrelevant traditions toward living the gospel in a twenty-first century context.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding, the concepts that are developed in this peer group will serve as a foundation for the empowering of the congregants as change agents who could in turn become transformative leaders. In an Internet article written by Sven Eriksson,<sup>40</sup> the question of a theology of leadership is discussed. In the discussion of the theoretical

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 209.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 29.

foundations for this peer group, three points were referenced that are noteworthy. First, “there are the characteristics described of leaders in the Bible who accomplished God’s will. Citing the biblical heroes listed in Hebrews 11, the characteristics include faith, (believing what God has said), obedience, (doing something that ‘normally’ would not have been done (obeying God’s directions regardless of what is seen) and vision (enabling movement beyond the horizon of understanding).”<sup>41</sup>

It can be inferred that effective leadership can be developed through preaching and teaching that is focused on the biblical record. The record indicates that God honors faith and obedience in leaders. For example, the Bible notes in Joshua, chapter 1, verse seven, “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”<sup>42</sup> Joshua was encouraged to be obedient and continue in that which he was taught by Moses and his promise was that God would prosper him. Similarly, throughout *A Transformational Model Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and Empowering Congregations In a Rural A.M.E. Church Setting Model*, careful attention will be given to teaching focused on the biblical record in order to give the congregants a foundation that they can continue in as Joshua was encouraged to do.

Finally, the Peer Group clarified and helped with the formation of the Ministry Model. They provided invaluable insight into identifying and addressing the visible

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<sup>40</sup> Sven Eriksson, “Toward a Theology of Leadership,” *Canada, Mennonite Church*, Nov. 2004, [http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/files/resources/equipping/51/Eriksson\\_letter-Nov04.pdf](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/files/resources/equipping/51/Eriksson_letter-Nov04.pdf), (accessed February 3, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Joshua 1:7 NKJV

needs within the researcher's context. Dr. Woods repeatedly challenged the researcher to narrow the scope of the project and focus on one specific, identifiable problem. The researcher is extremely grateful for and appreciative of this insightful advice. Out of the sharing and challenging of conflicting ideas, contrasting perspectives, and diverse experiences came a final Ministry Project that narrowly focuses on an identifiable and measurable problem within the researcher's ministry context. Hence the project that was born: *A Transformational Model Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and Empowering Congregations in a Rural A. M. E. Church Setting*.

## HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

To be a disciple is to be part of a new community, a new polity, which is formed on Jesus' obedience to the cross. The constitutions of this new polity are the Gospels. The Gospels are not just the depiction of a man, but they are manuals for the training necessary to be part of the new community. To be a disciple means to share Christ's story, to participate in the reality of God's rule . . . Because of a community formed by the story of Christ the world can know what it means to be a society committed to the growth of individual gifts rather than a threat . . . The most striking social ethical fact about the church is that the story of Jesus provides the basis to break down arbitrary and false boundaries between people.<sup>43</sup>

Conflict and tension in the church is nothing new. Carroll declares, "Because of the overlapping cultures that characterize a thick gathering, a congregation becomes a staging ground for generational conflict and efforts to mobilize influence."<sup>44</sup> It was present in the first church and remains present in the current church. However, according to Whitesel and Hunter, "As the church enters a new millennium, warning signs are

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<sup>43</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 11.

<sup>44</sup> Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Company, 2002), 10.

appearing on the horizon. The Christian church is polarizing along generational lines, and the generation gaps are intensifying this divergence.”<sup>45</sup> They also postulate, “If ever there were a cauldron brewing with misunderstanding, disparate perspectives, and distortion, it is the emotional intersection called “the generation gap.”<sup>46</sup> Differences in opinions, culture and various thought processes usually give rise to this ever present divergence. Whitesel and Hunter posit that “there is a lack of understanding about the emotional intersection where the generations meet.”<sup>47</sup> Conflict usually presents itself along the lines of a common age cohort or generation gap. A generation gap can be defined as differences in attitude, outlook and values that develop between two successive groups of people. According to Merriam-Webster, a generation gap is a popular term used to describe differences in cultural norms between members of a younger generation and their elders. This source further contends that a generation gap can occur when “older and younger people do not understand each other because of their different experiences, opinions, habits and behaviour”<sup>48</sup> Whitesel and Hunter reminds us, in Mark 3:25 Jesus tells us that, “if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” This ancient proverb is still relevant today, as generational tensions in our churches separate young people from the maturity and experience that senior members can impart. In addition, the fresh energy and new ideas that younger generations can bring are being forfeited.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Bob R. Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> The Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 7.

These authors further contend, “as a result of the generation gaps many aging congregations watch their youthful members go elsewhere. Unchurched young people the church desperately seeks to reach with the love and solace of Christ are viewing our churches as irrelevant and inflexible.”<sup>50</sup>

“The result is that many of these older churches and their proud legacies are doomed to die, if something is not done immediately.”<sup>51</sup>

The various delineated age groups have always been a part of our religious history. It was not until the 20th century that these diverse groups were actually identified and named. In fact, as Whitesel and Hunter state, the term generation gap was popularised by anthropologist Margaret Mead. This traditionally means “the chasm that separates the ideals and aspirations of the generation born before January 1, 1946 and those born afterward.”<sup>52</sup> The name and date ranges utilized to determine individual inclusion may vary, but most analysts agree that there are at least four distinct generations that coexist in our society today: Veterans (or the Silent Generation – born 1925–1942), the Baby Boomers (born 1943–1960), Generation Xers (or 13<sup>th</sup> Generation; born 1960–1981), and Generation Nexters (or Generation Y/Millennial Generation/i. generation; born 1982-2001).<sup>53</sup> Some historians have further identified, studied, and labelled three additional generations on either side of the previously listed factions. Those born 1883 – 1900 have been branded as the Lost Generation, those born 1901 –

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>53</sup> Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak, *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomer, Xers, and Nexters in Your Work Place* (New York:AMACOM Publishing, 2000), 3.

1924 as the G. I. Generation, and those born 2002 – 2025 as the Cyber Generation (see Table I).

The term “generation gap” was first coined during the 1960’s in Western countries and was magnified by the unprecedented size of the young Baby Boomer birth rate. Whitesel and Hunter states, “The generation gap historically exists between this pre-1946 generation and their offspring: The Baby Boomers.”<sup>54</sup> In fact, it is because of the size of this particular cluster that it enjoyed such unparalleled power, influence, and willingness to rebel against societal norms. Whitesel contends that, “Boomers are so designated because of an upswing in births that followed the returning GIs at the close of World War II. The expression boom was appropriated by media pundits to describe this increase in births in the same way a boom town in Old West parlance described a town artificially increasing in size born between 1946 and 1964.”<sup>55</sup> Each generation has its own salient character traits. The lines of demarcation may not be clearly drawn between the identified clusters, but it is remarkably clear that the different groups do exist and how they impact our society and their respective worldviews are as different as night and day. Thus we would expect there to be some misunderstandings, possibly leading to conflict as these worldviews intersect. However, according to Jackson W. Carroll, “Intergenerational conflict, like most other types, within a congregation thus involves a conversation of sorts with a religious tradition.”<sup>56</sup> Generation gaps have always existed.

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<sup>54</sup> Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 12.

What is crystal clear, however, is that a church's congregation, its programs, its style(s) of worship, and its outlook are dramatically linked to generation.

If one were to visit a random church on any given Sunday, the imbalance along generational cohorts among the worshippers would readily be noticed. Carroll and Roof declares, "Older people typically outnumber younger people in regular service."<sup>57</sup> Historic "mainline" Protestant congregations particularly have an imbalance of people sixty years of age and older.<sup>58</sup> This age-based pattern exists in every church, for every denomination, among every religion, throughout the United States and with other world religions. The most visible groups in the majority of congregations are those over the age of 60 and those under the age of 20. Carroll and Wade affirm that "Less conspicuous are the cultures of the in-between years. It is fairly easy to spot members belonging to these groups in the aggregate, but not so easy to draw the line between them, except for perhaps an occasional earring or tattoo. Because they do not sit together as separate generations, as do older people or youth, the two tend to be 'mixed throughout in the congregation.'"<sup>59</sup>

Pop culture oozes with spirituality, yet it is the younger generation that is obviously missing from these half empty churches.<sup>60</sup> It is this generation that does not automatically tie Biblical truth to social conservatism. However, according to William Strauss and Neil Howe, "their risk taking makes way for caution, their wildness and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>60</sup> Sara Savage, Bob Mayo, Graham Cray, and Sylvia Collins-Mayo, *Making Sense of Generation Y: The World View of 15-25 Year Olds* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006).

alienation (will turn) into exhaustion and conservatism, and their nomadic individualism (will mature) into a preference for strong Community Life.”<sup>61</sup> They are more liberal on social issues than their predecessors (i.e. they are very socially progressive and possess a high level of religious tolerance). Note to rural, declining or dying churches—churches that provide an appropriate worship service for this group are twice as likely to grow as those that do not. However, according to Whitesel and Hunter “aging churches may feel that if Boomers and Generation X are welcomed unreservedly, they will soon dominate a congregation, relegating the Builder generation to little or no influence. In a worst case scenario, the Builders may even be forced out.”<sup>62</sup>

Older generations mistakenly assume that the difference between them and the younger generations is simply a matter of maturity. An extension of this flawed concept is that once they grow up, the younger generation will fall in line and behave more appropriately. The issue is not one of maturity but one of differences. Many adults involved in leading and directing young people have a fundamentally different worldview than the young people themselves. The “gap” that this produces is the cause of much tension and frustration for young and old alike. In churches, in particular, the “gap” is a major contributing factor to the alienation of youth ministries, and causes young people to lose faith in their elders’ ability to guide them into the future. For many young people, the easy solution to this problem is to equate the church with the attitude of the adults. When they do this, they often conclude that church is out-dated, irrelevant and “not for

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<sup>61</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *13<sup>th</sup> Gen.: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 217.

<sup>62</sup> Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 24.



us,” and leave. When they do this, they do not only leave the institutionalised church, but very often also abandon their Christian faith, judging it to be equally irrelevant.

It is the writer’s aim to promote an understanding between the generations that is applicable to all our relationships. Once an understanding of generational behavior is grasped, a clearer picture of why people are like they are and why they act as they do, can be drawn to: 1) lead to a road of compromise and peaceful intergenerational coexistence due to a broader generational appeal; and 2) offer an alternative to church splits and the slow death of the rural A.M.E. church.

We must acknowledge that in order for the rural AME church to thrive, we must truly understand the importance of combining the experience and wisdom of the old with the creativity and adventure of the young to chart a course and draw the maps of this new world and its implications for the spreading of God’s Word to the next generations. To embrace an intergenerational church requires that we reconsider and clarify our denominational core values, beliefs, and practices. It means that nothing we have become can escape review, including our organizational structures, programs, staffing, funding, and decision-making processes. It means that ineffective activities will have to be let go; tired traditions will have to be refreshed and opportunities will have to be given for new forms of church to dawn. In light of traditions, the researcher agrees with Compton, who contends, “Our traditions represent the accumulated wisdom of the church’s practices and make them available to us to draw upon as a true legacy.”<sup>63</sup>

Generational differences also existed during Biblical times. Social and political leadership was vested in the older generation; more specifically it rested with the senior

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<sup>63</sup> Stephen C. Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline: New Life Through New Churches* (Washington DC: The Alban Institute, 2003), 14.

men. Evidence of such is illustrated in the Roman, Greek and Jewish societies of ancient times. In Ephesus in the first century, bodies of elders or *the Gerousia* existed in various cities and played a key role in governmental leadership. There was the man who was called the elder (*presbuteros*). The eldership is the most ancient of all offices within the Church. The Jews had their elders, and they traced their origin to the occasion when Moses, in the desert wanderings, appointed seventy men to help him in the task of controlling and caring for the people (Numbers 11:16). Every synagogue had its elders, and they were the real leaders of the Jewish community. They presided over the worship of the synagogue; they administered rebuke and discipline where these were necessary; they settled the disputes which other nations would have taken to the law-courts. Amongst the Jews the elders were the respected men who exercised a fatherly oversight over the spiritual and material affairs of every Jewish community. But more nations than the Jews had an eldership. The presiding body of the Spartans was called the *gerousia*, which means the board of the elder men. The Parliament of Rome was called the *senate*, which comes from *senex*, which means an old man. In England the men who looked after the affairs of the community were called the aldermen, which means the elder men. In New Testament times every Egyptian village had its village elders who looked after the affairs of the community. The elders had a long history, and they had a place in the life of almost every community.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000), 69.

The word Gerousia, loosely translates to “senate.”<sup>65</sup> It is referenced in the Book of Acts.<sup>66</sup> Some churches called these elected leaders “elders” as is still the custom of some modern churches today. The elders of present day churches usually have no correlation with age but in Biblical times, the older generation assumed a natural leadership role. Generations were also used as units to demarcate eras during Biblical times. This practice is still obvious today when we reference massive historical events such as the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Era and the assassinations of President John Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Great Depression, World War I or II, the horrific events of September 11, 2001, etc. Such events collectively affect the generational archetypes present early in their life cycles. Sociologists and psychologists do not agree on which age group is most influenced by the events of these unsettling times but the assumption is that a historical thumbprint is permanently made. Each generation or birth group has its own core values and way of looking at life, based upon shared experiences.

The apostle Paul, who was a member of the older generation, recognized the fact that generational differences could present a problem for young church leaders like Timothy. The Lord blessed Paul with the insight to visualize the awkward position Timothy would find himself in when he sought to lead those who were his seniors. The potential for resistance by the older generation was very real and therefore Paul advised Timothy to “Let no one despise your youth.”<sup>67</sup> Paul anticipated the possibility of generational conflict in the church, and he wrote a letter to the churches of Ephesus

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<sup>65</sup> James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. Electronic ed. Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996, S G1087.

<sup>66</sup> Acts 5:21 KJV

<sup>67</sup> I Timothy 4:12 NKJV

seeking to build bridges of understanding between the generations. He appealed to all of them to look beyond their differences to see the more important reality of their unity in Christ.<sup>68</sup>

Many older mainline and conservative congregations, with aging constituents and locations away from population growth centers, had already begun losing members throughout the 1950's, even as their denominations were growing rapidly as a result of the new suburban congregations. Not only are older churches located in contexts that make growth difficult, they often follow well-worn paths of church practice that are highly resistant to change.<sup>69</sup>

Compton further explains “the majority of American churches were shaped and perpetuated, not so much by outreach programs or overt evangelistic effort, but by large families whose progeny held membership and leadership for generations.” The old cannot afford to fortress themselves in the safety of the “known.” The young cannot abandon the fort completely and head out unarmed and unprotected into the “unknown.” The balance lies somewhere in between. As the younger generation introduces and carries out new ideas and practices, new and renewed congregations perform, as Compton notes, an important research and development task for the church.<sup>70</sup>

The migration of people from rural to metropolitan locales escalated in the latter half of the 20th century. The health of old mainline denominations was for many decades reliant upon the health of their mostly small rural and often kinship-constituted congregations. The well being of these churches was ensured by the predictable replacement of one generation of members and leaders by their children and

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<sup>68</sup> Bruce Salmon, “Generation to Generation” <http://villagebaptistbowie.org> 3, (accessed 28 February 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline*, 4-6.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

grandchildren.<sup>71</sup> The alpha leader, the primary influencer of the congregation, could relinquish most, if not all, of the role to a child from the next generation in time to mentor and guide this new alpha leader into a top position. Then, in the next generation, another leader was handed the mantle of leadership in the same way.<sup>72</sup> Without new, younger generations of members (traditionally the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of the church's primary families) to replace the older generation, however; these once multigenerational churches have become almost mono-generational, with a higher and higher average age of membership.

There is little debate about the fact that today's youth are different, but they are not just different because they are teenagers—they are very different from the kind of young people that the Baby Boomer were as teenagers. Today's youth are separated from their elders by incredible, fundamental shifts in thinking. There is a yawning chasm between today's adults (over 30) and youth (under 30) because today's adults do not know or understand or, in some cases, even acknowledge the existence of a fundamentally new world, with a fundamentally new worldview, they have lost the confidence of today's youth. Whereas in the past adults were looked to for help and a "roadmap" for the future, today's young people have little confidence in their ability to guide them into the third millennium—so they look elsewhere for assistance.

It is not the religion that turns our youth off but it is the representatives that are the culprit. In the style of the young hip hop language'—"*y'all ain't representin'; y'all ain't keepin' it real.*" Historically, the church has been the one institution in the Black community that provided both the spiritual and social network for support of families and

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

individuals. Many churches were family based. Berry and Blassingame, as quoted by Lincoln and Mamiya, also recognized that black families and black churches have constituted the “enduring institutions” in communities.<sup>73</sup> The Black church is at a crucial point in its history. Gone are the days when it served as a pillar of strength and a place of refuge during the Civil Rights Era. If something is not done NOW, the Black church will be drastically reduced to nothing more than a Sunday social club where the word of God is no longer spread but more often than not the idea that Jesus dwells only within the walls of a specific church or denomination will be promoted instead.<sup>74</sup> The whole religious experience is effectively limited to a two-hour (one hour, for some) period in a physical building, one day each week instead of the manifestation into the Christian daily life. The Black church experience is in imminent danger of becoming a mere ritual. To its credit, the Black church recognizes the need to adapt its mission for the 21st century to reach the younger generation. They are still out to lunch on how to do so effectively because most are of the mindset that to accomplish this means transforming the Sunday worship into hip hop central!

Lincoln and Mamiya state, the black church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low-income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and it nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development. E. Franklin Frazier’s apt descriptive phrase, “nation within a nation,” pointed to these multifarious levels of community involvement found in

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<sup>73</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 310.

<sup>74</sup> Scott, *What the Black Church Must Do in 2002*, 2.

the black church, in addition to the traditional concerns of worship, moral nurture, education, and social control. Much of black culture is heavily indebted to the black religious tradition, including most forms of black music, drama, literature, storytelling, and even humor.<sup>75</sup>

The birth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is a direct result of a generational gap created because of exclusionary racial practices condoned by the Methodist Church. In 1787, in the city of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, and Alexander Hamilton gathered to frame the Constitution of the United States. At the same time and in the same city, Richard Allen, Daniel Coker, and others were meeting to organize what has become the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. It (the AME church) was not established because of any theological differences with the Methodist Church, of which the founders were a part...it was established as a protest against segregation and discrimination, which these founders had experienced in St. George's Methodist Church.<sup>76</sup>

The history of the AME church is rich in tradition and Christian heritage. Its structure, not unlike most other churches, does not foster a multi-generational approach to worship. The best it has to offer is the odd event where one generation dominates and the others are invited to attend. Jackson W. Carroll, professor emeritus of religion and society at Duke Divinity School, and director of the J. M. Ormond Center for Research, Development and Planning says, "To ignore the churches' traditions is to ignore an

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<sup>75</sup> Eric D. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 8.

<sup>76</sup> Jamye C. Williams, *African Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union 1882* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee University Press, 2007), 1.

important means of grace. The accumulated wisdom of the church's practices as it has struggled through the years with what it means to be faithful is a rich resource for inspiration and guidance as we face our own challenges. Our traditions re-present that wisdom and make it available to us."<sup>77</sup>

The problem for Christians, as Lingenfelter correctly points out, is that when we attempt to pass on our Christian heritage to the next generation, or as his focus is in his book, attempt to pass it on to other cultures, we tend to pass on not only the fundamentals of the faith, but also a whole lot of our own cultural trappings.<sup>78</sup> He argues that culture is not neutral and this leads, in fact, to sin being passed on in the guise of religion. This is the real reason that generational conflict has arisen in the church—there is a fundamental culture clash, or “worldview gap” between old and young.<sup>79</sup> A new generation gap is emerging. It has emerged in addition to the generation gap that would be normal between parents and children and is thus exacerbating the generation gap. Attention must be directed to defining the causes of these worldview gaps that exist today.<sup>80</sup>

The rural AME enters the stage of rapid or slow decline when it can no longer balance its loss of membership, participation, giving, or influence with the counterweight of growth. It is evident when the membership includes only one or two aging generational groups; budgets shrink or are not met; needed building maintenance is

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<sup>77</sup> Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline*, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture*. Second Edition. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 15.

<sup>79</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *The Generation Gap* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly 1992), 24.

<sup>80</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *The Cycle of Generations* (New York: American Demographics 1991), 13.



deferred; worship or Sunday School attendance declines; few professions of faith and baptisms take place; pastors' salaries are cut (pastoral service is reduced from full-time to part-time); the same laity continue to serve as church leaders because no new leaders can be found; denominational mission funds are not fully supported; and long-standing programs are discontinued for lack of support. Such evidence of decline is often accompanied by congregational conflict, malaise, depression, blaming, scapegoating, anger, and withdrawal.<sup>81</sup>

This is an analogy for multi-generational ministry in the church. The church "family" consists of existing adults, into which come three different types of children: (1) those who are physically young in age, (2) those who are spiritually young, being recently converted and incorporated into the church universal, and (3) those who are spiritually old (and mature), but are new members of a specific church in its local form. If the existing "parents" simply refuse to acknowledge that the presence of these "babies" in their midst should change their lifestyle, and stubbornly insist that the child "must fit in with us," they will eventually discover that the child will waste away and be severely impaired in its development. In the same way, children cannot expect to have all their whims and fancies met—they are entering an environment where they are newcomers, and they must learn to interact with the "adults" that they find there.<sup>82</sup> There must, in other words, be a mutual "moving together" of the young and old, of the established and the new. This change is a continual process, just as the development from baby to child to teen to adult to married partner to parent to grandparent perpetuates a cycle of growth in a human being. In fact, change is the very sign of life in any living being. Once a

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<sup>81</sup> Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline*, 25.

<sup>82</sup> Strauss and Howe, *The Cycle of Generation*, 14.

living being stops changing, it eventually dies. Likewise, every organization must continually change to ensure that it remains alive.

This is especially true if the rural AME Church wishes to survive. Just as a family requires children to survive and carry on the family name, so must the church. Some churches have recognized the crisis of the present lack of involvement of young people in most mainline denominations. The AME church, along with all other organizations, needs to be open to the “new,” and especially to different cultural expressions. This is mandated in Scripture. We see this especially in the accounts, recorded mainly in the book of Acts, of the largely Jewish church coming to terms with the fact that God was saving the Gentiles as well. This is what multi-generational interaction is all about – the interaction of generations around a common goal: living in the present and the future. The task of older generations is not to pass down out-of-date cultural expressions, but to assist young people to develop completely “indigenous” expressions of faith within a new culture. This is difficult for older post-figurative generations who have never had cause to examine the basis of their theological beliefs, and hold all of these beliefs with equal fervour and passion.<sup>83</sup>

Multi-generational ministry is not so much another program, but rather it is about providing opportunity for adults to spend quality time with young people, where they come to the event on equal terms. This does not necessarily mean that they take away an equal amount. There is a clear Biblical mandate for the role of teacher to be taken primarily by the adult, and learner by the young person. However, multi-generational ministry takes seriously the interaction of young and old as “brothers and sisters in

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<sup>83</sup> Graeme Codrington and Sue Grant-Marshall, *Mind the Gap* (South Africa: Penguin Books, 2004).

Christ” where interpersonal ministry is primarily the responsibility of the Holy Spirit, mediated by all those involved.

The Black Church in America has long been recognized as the most independent, stable and dominant institution in the black community. Henry Mitchell states that it might seem strange to date this book on African American religion from 1619, the year the soon-to-be-enslaved Africans landed in Jamestown, Virginia. He goes on to state however, the religious faith and practice of the masses of black Americans goes back even earlier than 1619; the continuum starts in Africa.<sup>84</sup> In fact, says Gayraud S. Wilmore “It is now clear that black religion in North America had roots in Africa and the Caribbean as well as in the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>85</sup>

The fact that the Black church is still evolving from African traditional religion is also seen, to some extent, in the way churches of the masses still resist the removal of the senior members from office, no matter how feeble they may be. Of course, power is also an issue.<sup>86</sup> That type of issue has influenced this ministry model of introducing change in the rural church. It is this writer’s belief that the spiritual and cultural practices, which were to become the focus of attention in the Black Church, did begin in Africa long before the Black Church came into being. Africans brought to America as slaves resisted giving up the religions of their ancestors, but over the years, and with the birth of new generations on American soil, accepting Christianity became a part of accepting America

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<sup>84</sup> Henry Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings, the Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), xv.

<sup>85</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 3, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 15.

as home. Henry Mitchell quotes Bruno Chenu as stating “More than an imposition by the whites, it was the similarity between the Christian religion and their traditional religion that fostered the passage of faith of the hated master. And African beliefs still lived beneath visible Christianity.”<sup>87</sup> Mitchell states,

Of course, this is contrary to the widely circulated assumption that Africans were largely stripped of their native culture and religion during or after their voyage to these shores. The truth is that there is much hard evidence proving that Africans retained a great deal of their original cultural heritage. This is especially true of religion, which was much harder to stamp out than visible behaviors such as styles of manual labor. The long handled hoe of the colonies may have won out over the back straining short handled hoe of Africa, but the tenacity of the communally embraced traditional belief system was far greater. It was the people’s psychic survival kit.<sup>88</sup>

As with the Israelites after escaping from Egypt, over time, slaves found the biblical message of spiritual equality before God appealing and found comfort in the biblical theme of deliverance.

Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya present an analysis of the Black church as it relates to the history of African Americans and to contemporary black culture.<sup>89</sup> In examining both the internal structure of the church and the reactions of the church to external, societal challenges, the authors provide important insights into the church’s relationship to politics, economics, women, youth and music, and trends that will define the Black church well into the next century.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Bruno Chenu, *The Trouble I’ve Seen* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), 48-49.

<sup>88</sup> Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, xv.

<sup>89</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African Experience*.

<sup>90</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African Experience*, Back Cover.

Rural churches were a major change agent for life in the South. In 1890, about 90 percent of the black population resided in the South, with more than 80 percent living in the rural “black belt” counties. One hundred years later, this study reveals that nearly 80 percent of the black population now resided in urban areas.<sup>91</sup> This migration to urban areas has made a significant change in the rural church’s involvement in the social experience for African Americans. Lincoln and Mamiya’s research shows a trend toward loss of community involvement on the part of the rural church. Most of the rural church’s activity in this decade has centered around morning worship, Sunday school, and midweek services. This study also reveals some interesting information about the rural black churches participation with their communities. The research shows that of the 619 rural churches surveyed, only two had “social problem-oriented programs.”

Most of the rural church’s involvement in the community continued to revolve around civil rights issues and organizations, even though there are other pressing issues.<sup>92</sup> In the past, the church served as the school, social club, and political platform from which to speak for African Americans.<sup>93</sup> Today the needs of African Americans have changed, and the newcomers outside of the founding families along with various generations are reflective of these changes. Changes in the welfare system bring about a need for educational training, job training, daycare needs, and just the motivation to survive. Drug use and homelessness are also issues some have had to contend with. The study showed that out of the vast majority of rural churches, 589 (95.2 percent) did not participate in

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<sup>91</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African Experience*, 9.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-108.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

any government funded programs, while only 17 (2.7 percent) claimed involvement in such programs. Of these participants eight churches (1.3 percent) received government funds as centers for Head Start programs; 11 (1.8 percent) sponsored day-care centers or nursery schools; two (0.3 percent) participated in other programs. The survey found no participation in government funded programs like food services (breakfast or Meals on Wheels), housing for the elderly and the indigent, and other tutorial and remedial education programs. In comparison, the black urban churches in our sample, 121 (7.9 percent) participated in government funded programs at a higher rate.<sup>94</sup>

### **African Methodist Episcopal Church History**

This segment of the work focuses on the historical commitment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to show that the struggle with inclusiveness and alienation is not something new to the AME faith. The AME Church's struggle with exclusiveness and alienation could be seen during the struggle to be recognized as participants of worship and services with fellow Methodists at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. During this struggle to become part of a faith community, blacks were pulled off their knees while praying and forced to worship in the gallery of the church. There has always been a gap in the Methodist Episcopal Church, but it was racial instead of generational.

In *Richard Allen Apostle of Freedom*, Wesley purports during this time of racial discrimination against the African Americans in 1794, Bethel AME Church was dedicated with Allen as the pastor. However, to establish Bethel's independence from

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 110.

interfering white Methodists, Allen, a former Delaware slave successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution.<sup>95</sup>

These above-mentioned issues have also caused exclusion between Methodist and other denominations. Soon, many local Methodist congregations began to rise up. This brought about another issue of exclusion and oppression namely that of slavery. The social and spiritual needs of blacks could not be ignored. There was a cry for equality.<sup>96</sup>

W.E.B. DuBois was one of the great advocates for social advancement and improvement within the black community. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging, he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in flood of white Americanism. For he know that Negro blood has a message for the world.<sup>97</sup>

We then began to see the making of a black church with the soul of a nation. As the AME Church began to come together, once again there was exclusion among the fellowship. The struggle with the established against the new comers and other generations has caused ministry immobilization for quite sometime.

This segment now presents an overview of the founding of the denomination. The section concludes with a presentation of the conundrum that Bishop Daniel Payne faced

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<sup>95</sup> American Methodist Episcopal Church, "About Us-Our History" <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>. (accessed February 13, 2007)

<sup>96</sup> James Melvin Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 4-20.

<sup>97</sup> W.E. Burghardt DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 45.

as he sought to codify the denomination's genesis in the absence of a systematic approach to record keeping by the founders of the faith, namely Richard Allen, and other significant leaders of the early AME church.

Allen was converted to Christianity through Methodism while he was yet a slave. The evangelist who traveled south during the last half of the eighteenth century spreading the gospel influenced him and his brother.<sup>98</sup> Campbell suggests that most of the evangelists were not necessarily in favor of the abolition of slavery. Nevertheless, Black slaves were affected by their messages and accepted salvation through Christ. The spread of the gospel in the Chesapeake areas of Maryland, northern Virginia, and Delaware resulted in large numbers of Blacks converting to Christianity.<sup>99</sup>

Allen and his brother were among those affected by the salvific message of the gospel, which, for Allen, also meant freedom from the bondage that slavery held. Consequently, while accepting his conversion to Christianity, Allen also began to pursue his freedom from slavery.<sup>100</sup> After conversion, Richard Allen believed that God had loosened his shackles and released him of his bondage through his salvation. He notes,

One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighteth to hear the prayers of a poor sinner, and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God I cried. My soul was filled.<sup>101</sup>

Allen was able to convince his slave master, an unconverted man, to host traveling preachers from time to time as they came through the area. The founder of the

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<sup>98</sup> James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 6.



Methodist Episcopal Church, Francis Asbury, was one such preacher, as was Freeborn Garretson, a charismatic Methodist preacher, and former slave owner.<sup>102</sup> In one sermon, Garretson boldly admonished that on Judgment Day slaveholders would be “weighted in the balance, and...found wanting.”<sup>103</sup> Garretson’s sermon so affected Allen’s slave master, “that from that moment forward, he could not be satisfied to hold slaves, believing it to be wrong.”<sup>104</sup>

In 1783 Allen and his brother were able to purchase their freedom from slavery.<sup>105</sup> Allen worked zealously and exhibited an entrepreneurial spirit as he mended shoes, chopped wood, manufactured bricks, and hauled salt. His aim was to dispel the myth that had begun to emerge about the slovenliness of Blacks, thereby proving that they were deserving of being free from the oppressiveness of slavery.<sup>106</sup> During this same period, Allen also became a powerful preacher, preaching throughout New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, North and South Carolina.<sup>107</sup>

Philadelphia became fertile ground for Allen’s preaching and teaching. While Blacks could attend the services of both Quakers and Methodist, neither of the denominations wanted them to join.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> James A. Henretta, Elliot Brownlee, David Brody, Susan Ware, and Marilynn Johnson, *America’s History, Third Edition* (New York: Worth Publishers Inc., 1997).

<sup>104</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 6

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 9.

Stigmatized as idle and vicious, bereft of spiritual leadership, blacks in Philadelphia were ripe for Allen's evangelical message. "My labor was much blessed," he recalled in his memoir. "I soon saw a large field open seeking an instructing my African brethren, who had been a long forgotten people, and few of them had attended public worship."<sup>109</sup>

Allen was allowed to preach at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia at 5:00 a.m. each morning.<sup>110</sup> Within a short time, he dramatically increased its Black membership, and the building could no longer accommodate the growing congregation.<sup>111</sup> Allen believed that the Blacks' to whom he ministered wanted their own house of worship where their distinctive problems and needs could be addressed,<sup>112</sup> but the White elders at St. George rejected his request for a separate place of worship and chose instead to construct separate seating within the church by installing a balcony.<sup>113</sup>

Allen was rebuffed by Black leadership, which inclined to Anglicanism and Quakerism, in establishing a Black house of worship, and had to actualize his dream using another strategy.<sup>114</sup> In 1787, he and Absalom Jones, another black preacher, joined other ex-slaves and Quaker philanthropists to form the Free African Society, a quasi-

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Marvin Andrew McMickle, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2002).

<sup>112</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 9.

<sup>113</sup> McMickle, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage*, 1.

<sup>114</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 9.

religious benevolent organization that offered fellowship and mutual aid to “free Africans and their descendants.”<sup>115</sup>

The Society was organized along nondenominational lines, and the society welcomed Black men and women who led “orderly and sober lives.”<sup>116</sup> A large majority of the society had chosen to affiliate with the white Episcopal (formerly Anglican) Church because much of the city’s black community had been Anglican since the 1740s. “I informed them that I could not be anything else but a Methodist, as I was born and awakened under them,” Allen recalled.<sup>117</sup> His desire to impose the Methodist structure on the organization caused him to be, “read out of the organization on charges of convening irregular meeting, ‘attempting to sow division among us’ and generally engaging in ‘refractory’ behavior.”<sup>118</sup>

In 1790, Allen joined other influential blacks in Philadelphia to raise money for an independent African church.<sup>119</sup> Although most white Methodists in the 1790s favored emancipation, they did not treat free blacks as equals. They refused to allow African-Americans to be buried in the congregation’s cemetery.<sup>120</sup> The need for a separate worship center to address the needs of blacks, for Allen, reached its peak in 1792, when Absalom Jones, a black contingent and himself were ordered to sit in the back of the

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<sup>115</sup> Henretta, *America’s History*.

<sup>116</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 9.

<sup>117</sup> Henretta, *America’s History*.

<sup>118</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 10.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Henretta, *America’s History*.

newly constructed gallery at St. George's Methodist Church.<sup>121</sup> A white trustee further tried to remove Allen during prayer, which sparked a walkout of the entire group of blacks worshipping at St. George's.<sup>122</sup> Campbell says that,

... there was more to Allen's fidelity to Methodism than mere parochialism:<sup>123</sup> ... Notwithstanding we had been so violently persecuted ... we were in favor of being attached to the Methodist connection; for I was confident that there was no religious sect or denomination that would suit the capacity of colored people as well as the Methodist ... because of its openness to religious feeling, its simple doctrine, its reliance on spiritual or extempore preaching, which suited an unlearned people better than dry scriptural exegesis... [it] also emphasized discipline, vital to a people assailed by poverty and vice.<sup>124</sup>

In Allen's view Methodism provided a formula by which Blacks (if applied to their lives) could use to lift themselves up from their impoverished, degraded state—a possibility that his own life exemplified.<sup>125</sup> Salvation and freedom were linked in Allen's view; Christianity was a leveling power.<sup>126</sup> Just as darkness depends on a shuttering of light, so Allen believed slavery depended on the exclusion of Christian enlightenment? Once that gloom had been pierced, once slaves had felt the favor and love of God dwelling in their hearts the world edifice would crumble.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

From the 1770s increasing numbers of slaves converted to evangelical religions such as the Methodist and Baptist faiths.<sup>128</sup> The A.M.E. and A.M.E. Zion Churches “claimed Southern membership in the hundreds of thousands, far outstripping that of any other religious organizations” of their day.<sup>129</sup>

According to Maffly-Kipp, the missionary zeal to spread the gospel, particularly after the “Great [religious] Awakening” (1857-58), throughout the south, resulted in the financing of new churches and schools which,

... facilitated a remarkable increase in Southern Black literacy (from 5% in 1870) to approximately 70% by 1900), and ... promoted the rise of many African American leaders who worked well outside the sphere of church in politics, education and other professions.<sup>130</sup>

Miffly-Kipp further notes that there was tension between the Northern and Southern AME Churches which manifested as a class divide as black (and white) Northerners saw Southern black worship as,

hopelessly ‘heathen’ ... Missionaries Daniel Payne, an A.M.E Bishop ... took it as their (the Northern A.M.E.) task to educate Southern Blacks about what ‘true’ Christianity looked like; they wanted to convince ex-slaves to give up any remnants of African practices (such as drumming, dancing, or moaning), and to embrace a more sedate, intellectual style of religion.<sup>131</sup>

Campbell intimates that Richard Allen, co-founder and first Bishop of the AME Church, possessed a, “sense of representativeness ... ”<sup>132</sup> as it pertains to whites’

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<sup>128</sup> Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *The Church in the Southern Black Community: Documenting the American South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Maffly-Kipp, *The Church in the Southern Black Community*, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 7.



perspectives about black religious freedom and social engagement. “In the face of such scrutiny, every act became magnified (for Richard Allen) the slightest evidence of indolence or insolence confirmed white skepticism and cast another obstacle before the numberless bondsmen groping for redemption.”<sup>133</sup>

Campbell posits that, “this sense of representativeness, and the almost palpable feelings of obligation that flowed from it, would become abiding features in elite black politics in America, exhibited nowhere more dramatically than in the AME Church.”<sup>134</sup>

The first General Conference comprised of the Baltimore and Philadelphia churches were held in 1816, and the African Methodist denomination was formed as the first black denomination in the United States.<sup>135</sup>

Two years later, 1818, Richard Allen,

realized that it was necessary to initiate a method of disseminating information if there were to be growth of this embryonic church. The first department to be established was Publications, with Book Concern becoming the oldest publishing house of any importance owned by Negroes . . . (D)esigned to print the discipline, hymnals, church supplies, study course for young ministers (emphasis added), and church materials such as books, newspapers, and magazines.<sup>136</sup>

Once organized, teaching—and the preparation of a learned leadership, both in the church and in the community—was, and still remains, at the very core of the AME denomination’s mission. As the first African-American formal religious denomination, the A.M.E. Church excelled in creating religious institutions that were sustained by a

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Williams, *African Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union* 1882, 1.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

highly developed leadership hierarchy, largely trained in colleges and universities started by the A.M.E. prior to and at the close of legalized slavery. This struggle with inclusiveness and alienation is not something that is new to the African Methodist Episcopal faith. The AME Church's struggle with inclusiveness and alienation could be seen during the struggle to be recognized as participants of worship services with fellow Methodists at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. During this struggle to become part of a faith community, blacks were pulled off their knees while praying and forced to worship in the gallery of the church. In *Richard Allen: Apostle of Freedom*, Wesley purports,

The colored members were to sit toward the front and above the seats which they had previously occupied, they went forward. The services had begun as they neared the seats which they thought were for them. The elder began at the moment to lead the congregation in prayer. They knelt, and Allen says that shortly thereafter he heard considerable scuffling and talking in low tones. Lifting his head he saw one of the trustees seize Absalom Jones and attempt to pull him from his knees, while saying that they could not kneel there. Conscious of the proprieties of the situation, Absalom Jones asked him to wait until prayer was over. This request was refused and the effort was continued to move him from this particular place. Finally, Absalom Jones said, 'Wait until prayer was over and I will get up and trouble you no more.' Again the trustee declined to desist and beckoned to another of the trustees to come to his assistance. This one started toward William White. By this time prayer was over. The little group, after a brief consultation, as Allen states, 'all went out of the church in a body and they were no more plagued with us in the church.'<sup>137</sup>

During this time, racial discrimination against the African-Americans was determined to be the cause of exclusion and alienation. The black members of St. George's decided to transform their reciprocated group into an African congregation

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<sup>137</sup> Charles H. Wesley, *Richard Allen: Apostle of Freedom* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, Inc. 1969), 52-53.



namely the Free African Society (FAS). This small group was led by Allen who resolved to remain Methodists. In 1794, Bethel AME was dedicated with Allen as pastor. To establish Bethel's independence from interfering white Methodists, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution.<sup>138</sup>

These above-mentioned issues have also caused exclusion between Methodist and other denominations. Soon many local Methodist congregations began to rise up. This brought to view another issue of exclusion and oppression namely that of slavery. The social and spiritual needs of blacks could not be ignored. There was a cry for equality.<sup>139</sup>

We then began to see the making of a black church with the soul of a nation. As the AME Church began to come together, once again there was exclusion among the fellowship. The struggle with the establishment against the newcomers and other generations has caused ministry immobilization for quite sometime.<sup>140</sup>

The same holds true for Clover Garden AME Church. Once again, the church's struggle with inclusiveness seeks to immobilize the work of the ministry. It appears that whenever there is an attempt to liberate or minister to different generations or outsiders the work of the ministry will always suffer. This calls for a model to introduce change that will assure the continuance of work in ministry which the rural church is called to do.

Clover Garden AME Church is a rural church whose membership is comprised of 60 % Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, 17% Veterans and the remaining 23% is made

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<sup>138</sup> American Methodist Episcopal Church, "About Us-Our History" [www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php](http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php). (accessed February 13, 2007).

<sup>139</sup> James Melvin Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 4-20.

<sup>140</sup> Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship*, 136-140.

up of Millennials and the GI Generation. The local context has a great desire to reach beyond its community boundaries but thus far has been unsuccessful. This is largely because it is unable to reach beyond the established boundaries that exist within the church itself. The membership has increased gradually but these new congregants are members of the younger generation and they bring with them a new lifestyle and worldview. This increase is the cause of much concern and anxiety for its older membership. Dissention is common among the two dominant groups. In most conflicts, the Baby Boomers and Nexters find themselves aligned together against their elders.

The cause of the conflict between these groups is rooted in fear. For the Veterans, it is the fear that relinquishing the reins of leadership to the younger generations would leave them with no vital role in the church. Additional concerns include the Veterans' fear of the eventual loss of the church's identity and traditions. On the other hand, the younger generations fears of upsetting and causing a greater divide in the church with their elders by becoming more involved in the daily operation of the church and assuming positions of leadership beyond those traditionally regulated to the youth and newcomers.<sup>141</sup>

This model does not follow Gedcke's<sup>142</sup> concept of inclusion of new members into the established ministry, but will instead illustrate the importance of integrating all members into the service of the ministry and kingdom building. Dr. Walter Mack, a

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<sup>141</sup> Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline*.

<sup>142</sup> Roger Franklin Gedcke, *Integrating Newcomers into Rurban Congregation: a Case Study in North Branch, Michigan* (D. Min. Thesis, Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary), 1.

prominent, local minister, asserts that when the Holy Spirit is in charge in church, He brings us together and takes us to the next level.<sup>143</sup>

According to Bob Whitesel and Robert R. Kent, “The primary cause of decline in rural churches is its inability to assimilate younger generations to the same degree it successfully incorporated older generations same degree it has successfully incorporated older generations.”<sup>144</sup>

Young people are a litmus test for the vitality of a church. It is imperative that leadership is transferred to successive generations in an effort to continue our rich legacy. We can no longer foster a take it or leave it attitude when it comes to our youth. Instead, we must begin the transition of embracing them, uniqueness and all. Failure to do so will escalate the already alarming rate at which we are losing them to the popular inter-denomination and non-denomination mega churches. If the youth are to be our future leaders, how will they be equipped to lead if we don’t teach them? Paul Fleischmann, chairman of the World Evangelical Alliance Youth Commission notes that there are still many global gatherings that challenge the church to reach the world but forget to include young people in the effort to reach their peers. We need to recognize that unless youth are involved now, they may not be there when the church needs them as leaders. Young people must be integrated into the church as a fellow group with its own culture – not as a mere subgroup of a larger demographic cohort.<sup>145</sup> To achieve a true intergenerational church we must no longer look at our youth as a part of the family but as an entirely

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<sup>143</sup> Walter L. Mack, Jr., *Passion for Your Kingdom Purpose* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>144</sup> Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 17.

<sup>145</sup> Paul Fleishman and Ken Paynter, “Profile of Youth and Youth Ministry in the 90’s” <http://www.btc.co.za/ymprof.htm> (accessed 13 February 2008).

separate entity. Maybe it's as simple as heeding the advice of Spencer Burke, author of *Making Sense of Church*, to utilize a turn-table during the worship service and deliver sermons through an IPOD!<sup>146</sup>

## SUMMARY

The historical perspective illustrates the underlying assumption that young people will enter into the adult world more equipped for the world if they have significant involvement with adults who understand the world as it currently is, as opposed to the world as it was when they were young. Adults will be able to make this mental adjustment if they are prepared to view their world in a complete context, rather than in atomized parts. Without such interaction between the generations, families, schools, businesses and churches one will not be able to survive for very long in the third millennium. If this demise is not by the simple aging, and literal dying, of their current constituency, then it will be by a more conscious effort of young people to dismantle the organization. Either way, there is no real option for organizations of all types—we must involve young and old alike in a dynamic partnership.

Young, old and in-between are equally valuable to Christ's service. The church needs the social involvement, the team orientation and the work ethic of the middle generation. In addition, the church also needs the energy, the vitality and the enthusiasm of the younger generation. We all need each other. There will always be differences between the generations but more important than our differences is our unity in Christ! The following section offers the Biblical Foundation for this Ministry Project.

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<sup>146</sup> Spencer Burke, *Making Sense of Church: Eavesdropping on Emerging Conversations about God, Community and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Youth Specialties, 2003).

## BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Ezra 3:8-13

This segment of the chapter establishes the biblical foundation for this ministry project and the particular work associated with *A Transformational Model Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and Empowering Congregations in a Rural A.M.E Church Setting*. It is situated in the Old Testament story of Ezra and the rebuilding of the temple found primarily in Ezra 3:8-13 and tangentially in Haggai 2:1-3.

The researcher chose this particular passage of scripture because in her estimation it reflects how different generations respond to the same situation, as is indicated in Ezra 3:12-13:

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.<sup>147</sup>

This writer notes there are expressed differences in values with each of the different generations.

The Generation Gap is a continual source of pain and confusion for each successive generation. There have always been differences, difficulties, misunderstandings, tensions and struggles represented in the attitudes and experiences of various generations. According to Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof “almost all religious communities have to confront the tensions between generations—such as the pre-boomers, baby boomers, and gen Xers—who all bring their unique understandings of

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<sup>147</sup> Ezra 3:12-13 NRSV

faith, various levels of religious literacy, and different expectations of what a church or synagogue should be and do in the lives of its members.”<sup>148</sup> Patterns are complex but closely bound up with generational change.<sup>149</sup> It is evident that every generation is influenced by events that occur during their lifetime and they are shaped by the events of the present day, also. In comparison, the older generation is stuck on how things have always been. Those are the ones that have become satisfied with the past and just refuse to change. This writer agrees with Carroll’s observance and overall remarks regarding the resolution of differences between the generations. As the often-heard refrain goes, “This is how we do things here.”<sup>150</sup> Youth are always operating in their time, not in past time. It occurred to this writer that some causes of this generation gap are that the older generation compares the new with the past, but the youth do not have the past with which to compare. Everything looks good until you compare it to something else. Social times and conditions put a stamp on what is good.

In the forefront of this writer’s mind are several Biblical instances of tensions and misunderstandings between different generations that can be found in the scriptures. One such instance occurs in Genesis 13, between Abraham and his nephew Lot, where a conflict arises between Abraham’s herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen causing them to separate from each other. Theodore Hiebert postulates even in the conflict Abram is a peacemaker, mediating the dispute between his and Lot’s shepherds, and he is generous,

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<sup>148</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, inside flap.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

offering Lot his choice of land.<sup>151</sup> Lot, in turn chooses the plain of the Jordan, which seems to be the better land. The fact remains they are both headed for the same destination, the Promise Land, but they chose to take different directions to accomplish the same goal. You can vividly sense the tension between the young and the old. There are several other Biblical references to generational conflict that immediately come to mind. They include the scriptures that reflect tension between Saul and David in I Samuel 18:10-12 where Saul attempts to kill David.<sup>152</sup> Carol Grizzard states in the notes of this text, “When David is successful in battle and becomes more popular with the people than Saul is, Saul’s love turns to anger and suspicion.”<sup>153</sup>

Bruce Birch posits, “The celebration of David unfolds a dark counter drama from Saul.”<sup>154</sup> Tension intensifies with every gallop of the mounted horses returning from war after David had killed the Philistine. Birch goes on to state when the love and success surrounding David finds expression in the songs of the women, praising him more extravagantly than they praise Saul in I Samuel 18:7, Saul’s response is anger (v. 8) and an “eyeing” of David (v. 9), which must be interpreted as “suspicion” and/or “jealousy.”<sup>155</sup> Jealousy and anger can be seen as causes of the gap in those generations as well as the destruction of the relationship. However, there was a bonding of Jonathan and David seemingly of the same generation in comparison to the eventual relationship of

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<sup>151</sup> Theodore Hiebert, *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), Notes 30.

<sup>152</sup> I Samuel 18:10-12 NRSV

<sup>153</sup> Carol Grizzard, *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible I Samuel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 420.

<sup>154</sup> Bruce C. Birch, *The New Bible Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 2* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 1118.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Saul and David. Saul and Jonathan here displayed a difference in their view of the same person.

Jonathan experiences an immediate bonding with David—his soul was bound to David’s soul (v. 1).<sup>156</sup> Birch further states that “there was no motivation given for this bonding, but it is obviously deeply personal.”<sup>157</sup>

Finally, there is the story of Elijah and Elisha who were obviously of two different generations. According to Paul J. Achtemeier, Elijah was an Israelite prophet in the times of Kings, Ahab and Ahaziah, during the first half of the ninth century B.C. He was considered a protagonist of four stories in the book of Kings.<sup>158</sup> Elijah is most noted for his role in fighting against Baal and the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Elisha, according to Achtemeier was a farmer who lived with his parents at Abel-meholah (location uncertain; I Kings 19:16-21). Since he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen when Elijah met him, scholars have suggested that his father was a wealthy landowner.<sup>159</sup> Elisha left home and joined Elijah and was with him when Elijah was transported to heaven. Elijah asked Elisha, “what shall I do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”<sup>160</sup> In I Kings 19:19 Elijah’s throwing of his mantle over Elisha, according to Walter J. Harrelson, symbolizes Elisha’s commissioning and the transfer of authority from Elijah

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<sup>156</sup> Birch, *New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary Volume 2*, 1120.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1985), 256.

<sup>159</sup> Achtemeier, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 259.

<sup>160</sup> I Kings 2 :9



to him. He further states, "The cloak represents an individual's personality (I Samuel 18:4); to have it was to have rights of its owner (2 Kings 2:13-14)."<sup>161</sup> These two prophets of different generations worked together with Elijah seemingly functioning as a mentor to Elisha and now passing the mantle to him as his ministry comes to an end.

### **Life situation of the text**

According to Ralph W. Klein, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally considered a single literary work called Ezra. Although this work was already separated into two books by Origen and Jerome, the division does not appear in the Hebrew Bible until the fifteenth century, and the statistics traditionally given at the end of a biblical book ("final massorah") come only at the end of the twenty-three chapters of Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>162</sup> According to McKenzie and Kaltner, this book recounts the return of Jews from Babylon under Persian authority to their homeland and the rebuilding of the temple. In the end, more important than the temple rebuilding is the reconstitution of Israel as a religious community under the law promulgated by Ezra.<sup>163</sup>

According to these authors, Ezra-Nehemiah begins with the decree of Cyrus, the first king of the Persian Empire, allowing the exiles from Judah and Jerusalem to return home (Ezra 1:1-4). This statement is essentially the same as the last two verses of II

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<sup>161</sup> Walter J. Harrelson, *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), study notes 515.

<sup>162</sup> Ralph W. Klein, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, vol. 3 The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 663.

<sup>163</sup> Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth & Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 360.

Chronicles. It is followed by an inventory of the temple treasures brought back by the returnees (1:5-11) and a list of the returnees themselves (Ezra 2).<sup>164</sup>

These prior activities resulted in a three-phase restoration process. The first phase began with the rebuilding of the temple, which is narrated in Ezra 3-6. The restoration of the altar and reconstruction of the temple foundation that was laid represents the beginning of the people who were in exile. This new foundation for the temple was laid under the rule of Jeshua, a priest, and Zerubbabel, who is included in the royal lineage of David (Ezra 3). Mark Throntveit posits the previous chapters were concerned to establish the continuity between pre- and postexilic Israel in terms of God's gracious activity and the physical transplanting of the people themselves.<sup>165</sup> According to Throntveit, the theme of continuity is carried out with reference to worship, that sacred institutional element of the people's life that would increasingly bind them together in the new community.<sup>166</sup> Klein addresses the theme of continuity as he posits in verse 3 the post-exilic community put the altar on its old foundations (plural, though both the NSRV and NIV have the singular), thereby underscoring the continuity with the First Temple.<sup>167</sup>

The scheming from local opponents leads to a decree by the Persian King Ahaseurus that would halt the work (Ezra 4). The work is resumed and completed under

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Mark A Throntveit, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, Ezra-Nehemiah* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 22

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Klein, *The New Interpreter's Bible in Twelve Volumes*, 691.

the King's successor, Darius, at the urging of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5-6).<sup>168</sup>

The second phase acknowledges the restoration of the community under Ezra's leadership (Ezra 7-10). Ezra the scribe is sent by King Artaxerxes on a mission of religious instruction to the residents of Judah and Jerusalem.

The third and final stage of restoration is the rebuilding of the rest of the city of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-7:5).<sup>169</sup> Nehemiah in this stage relates that he has been commissioned by Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem as opposed to Ezra's call to rebuilding the altar and laying of the foundations of the Temple.

Throntveit observes, first, that it is significant that "the people gathered together in the 'seventh month (3:1, 6).'" The seventh month, as the most important of the liturgical year, was especially opportune for embarking on new ventures and appears regularly as a thematic element in this literature (Nehemiah 7:73b; 8:2; 8:14-18; cf. II Chronicles 5:3; 7:8-10.)<sup>170</sup> According to Throntveit this expression of their unity after the long years of dispersion in Babylon would serve to proclaim their solidarity as a group and cohesion as a people united in the praise of God. The people of God have always appreciated the importance of liturgical worship, in whatever form, for providing the opportunity to express their interdependence under God. With this restoration of worship on an altar re-established upon the very site that had lain dormant throughout the long years of exile, the people also reaffirmed their continuity with the sacral traditions of the

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<sup>168</sup> McKenzie and Kaltner, *The Old Testament Its Background*, 360.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 360-361.

<sup>170</sup> Throntveit, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary, Ezra-Nehemiah*, 22.

past. For the first time since the destruction of 587 B.C., the offerings prescribed, “in the law of Moses the man of God” (Ezra 3:2) were presented to the Lord.<sup>171</sup> Ralph W. Klein notes worship is the center of any thriving community of believers.<sup>172</sup> Klein postulates that the form and substance of worship must change to meet the challenges of each new generation, but worship needs also to continue and maintain the heritage of mothers and fathers in the faith. Worship must be a blend of innovation and tradition.<sup>173</sup>

Joseph Blenkinsopp, states as to verse 8, according to the logic of the narrative up to this point, the second year would be during the reign of Cyrus (therefore 537/6 BC).<sup>174</sup> This date differs from the one noted by some other writers such as D.J.A. Clines who states the building of the temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua) plainly took place not in 538 BC but from 520 BC onward, as Haggai’s reference to the temple lying waste in his days makes certain (Haggai 1:4, 9).<sup>175</sup> However, he does state that this chapter, if chronologically accurate, must describe an attempt made in 538 BC, which proved abortive when opposition was encountered (4:1-5).<sup>176</sup>

It is of importance to note that Blenkinsopp says Chronicles makes no allusion to Sheshbazzar even though the Aramaic source attributes the laying of the foundation to

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>172</sup> Klein, *The Interpreter’s Bible in Twelve Volumes*, 693.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Old Testament Library: Ezra-Nehemiah A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 100.

<sup>175</sup> D.J.A. Clines, *The New Century Bible Commentary; Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 68.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

him (5: 16).<sup>177</sup> Neither Haggai nor Zechariah alludes to him either, and they give no hint of any previous attempt to rebuild the temple, which at their time still lay in ruins (Hag. 1:4). Both prophets attribute the foundation-laying to Zerubbabel and place it in the reign of Darius not Cyrus (Haggai 2:18; Zechariah 4:9).

The text states, “in the second year after their arrival at the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month,” and causes this writer to note according to Joseph Blenkinsopp, the work on the First Temple also began in the second month that of Ziv, later Iyar (I Kings 6:1, 37; 2 Chronicles 3:2).<sup>178</sup> Mark A. Throntveit, postulates;

that despite this deliberate parallel with the First Temple, two items emphasize points of contrast. In the past, pious kings had themselves provided for the restoration of the Temple, just as David and Solomon had themselves borne the financial burden of the cult. But now, for the first time, we see the congregations as a whole coming together in support of the task.<sup>179</sup>

The second point of contrast has a more bittersweet flavor. The comparisons with Solomon’s Temple were intended to encourage the community by establishing points of continuity with the past. Verses 10-11 attest the success of that intention since most of those assembled joyfully praised God at the laying of the foundation. At least some in the group, however, still recalled the splendor of the first temple and were unable to join in the festivities as they were moved to tears by the comparison (vv.12f.).<sup>180</sup>

The researcher observes as it relates to continuity even in Ezra 1:7 the vessels are symbolic of the continuity between the old temple being destroyed and the new temple being rebuilt. In transformation and transition, there should always be continuity.

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<sup>177</sup> Blenkinsopp, *The Old Testament Library A Commentary Ezra-Nehemiah*, 100.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Throntveit, *Interpretation, Ezra-Nehemiah*, 24.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

It is important to note in verse 8b that all that came out of the captivity appointed the Levies, from twenty years old and upward to the oversight of the work on the house of the Lord.<sup>181</sup> Blenkinsopp notes that the minimum qualifying age is here and elsewhere (I Chronicles 23:24-27; 2 Chronicles 31:17) set at twenty, but we also find twenty-five (Numbers 8:24) and thirty (Numbers 4:3, 23, 39; I Chronicles 23:3).<sup>182</sup> He further states the age was probably lowered progressively as the range of functions associated with the Levitical office increased.<sup>183</sup>

According to Klein, the NSRV and the NIV replace the name of the Levite “Judah” in v. 9 with “Hodaviah” following 2:40; the NSRV, probably replaces the Masoretic Text’s “descendants of” with the name “Binnui,” adjusting the text to agree with the text of 2:40, which has in turn been emended on the basis of I Esdras 5:26.<sup>184</sup> He further states the Levitical sons of Henadad (9) are mentioned again in Nehemiah 3:18, 24; and 10:9. The Levite in this verse of course, is to be distinguished from the high priest of the same name mentioned in v. 2.<sup>185</sup> Klein quotes from David Peterson;

... where he has proposed the ‘founding’ of the Temple in this chapter and in Hag. 2:18 and Zech. 4:7-10 refers to a foundation deposit ceremony or *kalu*, known elsewhere in the ancient Near East.<sup>186</sup>

Klein further contends;

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<sup>181</sup> Ezra 3:8b NSRV

<sup>182</sup> Blenkinsopp, *The Old Testament Library A Commentary Ezra-Nehemiah*, 101.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Klein, *The Interpreter’s Bible in Twelve Volumes*, 692.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> David L. Petersen, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, OTL* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1984), 88-90.

... through the ritual of this festival a site of a destroyed temple was purified so that it could once again function as a holy space. A stone taken from the foundations of the old temple was installed in the new temple during this ceremony (cf. Zech. 4:7-10). Hence, Sheshbazzar worked on the Temple footings (5:16), but the Golah community in Ezra 3 carried out the foundation deposit ceremony.<sup>187</sup>

According to Bernhard W. Anderson the Golah Community were those people of the land who did not take part in the Babylonian captivity but stayed in Palestine.<sup>188</sup>

Verse 10 begins with praise for just the foundation of the temple being laid. However, Blenkinsopp states, while the verbal stem *ysd* does not invariably connote the laying of foundations and while the parallel I Esdras 5:57, speaks only of building the temple, the solemnity with which the occasion was celebrated strongly indicates that this is what was happening.<sup>189</sup> They sang praises antiphonally and gave thanks to YHVH, “for he is good, his love for Israel endures for ever”; and all the people raised a great shout in praise of YHVH because the foundations of the temple had been laid.<sup>190</sup> The goodness and love (*hesed*) of YHVH recalls to the worshiper the theme of covenant fidelity. The shout also associated with warfare, was probably understood as acclaiming YHVH as King of Israel (cf. the psalms of divine kingship, Ps. 93; 95-99).<sup>191</sup>

Emmett Hamrick postulates, it was appropriate that the laying of the foundation of the temple should be accompanied by a service of praise and thanksgiving. The temple

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<sup>187</sup> Klein, *The Interpreter's Bible in Twelve Volumes*, 692.

<sup>188</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding The Old Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Press, 1998), 461.

<sup>189</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Old Testament Ezra-Nehemiah*, 101.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

site had been a mass of ruins since 587 B.C. Hamrick goes on to affirm that now through the divine initiative Cyrus permitted a new beginning. The laying of the foundation signaled the dawn of a new day. It had been possible only because the Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever.<sup>192</sup> Praise and thanksgiving should always be the proper response to God's manifestation and revelation when there is a possible solution, and even in one that actually seems impossible. This writer believes praise exalts God and His work and is a part of worship in which all people are to participate.

However, Klein states, "the author of Ezra-Nehemiah makes a significant addition: God's steadfast love is not graciousness for all people; rather, God's loyalty is directed especially to Israel."<sup>193</sup> He further states "the great shout of all the people (note again the unanimous participation of the community in the temple foundation ceremony) was the kind of acclaim given to God as King in the enthronement psalms (Psalms. 47:5; 93; 95-99)."<sup>194</sup>

The main focus of this Biblical foundation is derived from verses 12-13 of the third chapter of Ezra. This scriptural text describes the reaction of the older Levite leaders to shouts of the younger generation upon the completion of the temple foundation. Clines questions

. . . why did the old men weep, who had seen the Solomonic temple fifty years previously? Because they knew they would not live to see the rebuilding completed (Solomon's temple had taken seven years, I Kings 6:38, or simply because of the memory of its former splendor (cf. Haggai 2:3)? Or was it weeping for joy? Certainly the Chronicler regards the weeping as being Klein posits, "Some of the older clergy and family

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Klein, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 692.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.



heads, who had seen the pre-exilic Temple, broke into tears during the foundation deposit ceremony (v. 12; the NIV, which connects the word ‘foundation’ to the new Temple is better). It had been forty nine years since that Temple was burned, if the ceremony took place in 538, sixty – seven years if the ceremony was held in 520, hence those who cried were elderly. Commentators have proposed various reasons for the crying; The elderly people knew they would not live to see the Temple’s completion, the new Temple was not up to the splendor of the previous one, or the tears were tears of joy.<sup>195</sup>

Haggai quotes an opposite divine oracle:

Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?<sup>196</sup>

Klein continues stating that

Other clergy and family heads shouted loudly with joy, and it was impossible to distinguish those who rejoiced from those who wept. ‘The sound was heard far away’ (v. 13). This comment not only expresses the loudness of the ceremony’s sound, but it also provides a hint that some who heard these sounds would be very unhappy about them.<sup>197</sup>

Both generations shouted at the climax of this phase of building the new temple but for very different reasons. Neither knew the source of the other’s clamor nor could either discern whether the noise was the result of a joyous occasion or the consequence of some somber event. Herein lays the opposing attitudes and thus conflict between the different generations . . . the elders shouted in remembrance of the past while the younger generation shouted in celebration for the beginning of the future simply because they had little or no knowledge of the past. As previously stated, the younger generation had the propensity to operate entirely in the present tense. Since they had no knowledge of the history of the inaugural Temple, they rejoiced in the fact they had the privilege of being

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<sup>195</sup> Klein, *New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, 693.

<sup>196</sup> Haggai 2:3 NSRV

<sup>197</sup> Klein, *New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, 693.

eyewitnesses to the laying of the foundation of the soon to be built temple —the symbol of worship.

In pondering the generation gap, it is apparent to the writer that the actual cause of the conflict between the generations is due to a difference in culture not generation and should aptly be called a cultural gap. Each generation seems to become a sub-culture with its own language (slang), customs, music, and common experiences. To effectively minister to all generations, the burden is upon the church and its leaders to educate itself about the respective habits, preferences, and ways of thinking of each generation. Once this has been successfully accomplished, the gospel then can be introduced in the culturally appropriate context. The message of the Gospel is timeless and its delivery methods must be timely. While scriptural truths must not be compromised, the approach should be adjusted, the truth repackaged, and the gospel contextualized to the target culture. Since we have a vested interest in the growth and perpetuation of our local churches, we must think strategically about a means to ensure that we never lose a generation. In other words, there needs to be some common ground.

## **SUMMARY**

Ezra 3:8-13 was selected primarily because it demonstrates that Daniel's prophecy in Chapter 4 foretold that the people who were held captive in Babylon were initially a learned people, but after many years in captivity their intelligence may have been effectively stripped from them. When people lack information that has not been codified or recorded they are forced to rely solely on their own memory. The older generation remembered the original Temple of Solomon and its significance in Biblical history.

Anderson posits, “The modest new Temple served as the center and bulwark of Israel’s life in the post-exilic period. What was lacking in architectural beauty was covered over by the great devotion lavished upon it, and above all by the conviction that it was the place where Yahweh tabernacled in the people’s midst.”<sup>198</sup>

In order to prevent generational gaps in congregations, there must be a process of connecting the younger generation with the past by continually teaching them about the traditions and the importance of a faith walk with God. The teaching component is very important in providing a bridge for generations. Core values are lost because of the failure to relay the stories to successive generations. If the importance of worship and the historical significance of the Old Temple had been taught to the new generation, the implications of the different responses of thanksgiving and praise may have been one of unity instead of a mixture of joy and sorrow.

### **New Testament Foundations**

Mark 2:18 – 22

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him. ‘Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins’<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Anderson, *Understanding The Old Testament*, 464.

<sup>199</sup> Mark 2:18-22 NKJV

The researcher chose this particular passage of scripture because it illustrates the need to be able to introduce changes that will bridge the generational gap and empower congregations by enabling a continuous growth with the youth through encouragement from the old. It is the intent of this project to assure the congregants that the proposed changes will not affect the traditions of the church, but may require that all congregants alter their methods by which tradition is rendered. The essence and the content of the Gospel's message will not change however, a different approach or a different method by which it is conveyed might be necessary in some instances to be invoked. It is not the intent of the researcher to implement radical changes but to introduce a progressive means of experiencing change for the improvement of the context.

The scripture text of the researcher's focus is Mark 2:18-22. The Book of Mark, which is the second book in the order of New Testament's presentation, was probably historically the earliest written. Traditionally, it is held that the Gospel of Mark was written to the Christian Community in Rome that was undergoing persecution. That is one of the reasons it is generally thought to have been composed shortly before the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Tradition claims John Mark as the author and St. Peter as the eyewitness authority, who supplied much of the information for this compilation. Due to the fact that much of the same material recorded in Mark is found in both the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, it is likely that Mark's Gospel served as an important source for the latter two, and is often referred to as the Q source.

The Gospel of St. Mark can be divided into four major sections for study purposes: the beginning of the ministry of Jesus; His initial two years of preaching and healing in Galilee; the third year of His ministry, including the journey to Jerusalem; and

finally, the passion and His resurrection. The earliest manuscripts of this Gospel conclude with the miraculous news of Christ's resurrection proclaimed at His open tomb while later manuscripts conclude with a longer passage detailing the incident when the risen Jesus appears to some of His disciples. A large portion of the Gospels is devoted to the events of the week preceding Christ's trial and crucifixion, which are foreshadowed earlier in the Gospel by His three "passion predictions."

In surveying the Gospel according to Mark, one can readily see that it "is the briefest, and in some ways, the most attractive of the four Gospels. Its sparse, unpretentious prose provides uniquely vivid images of Jesus as a Man of action."<sup>200</sup> Because of the circumstance to which the targeted audience was enduring, though Mark identified Jesus as a teacher, what Jesus does for Mark is more important than what Jesus teaches. This Gospel is believed to have been written mainly to highlight Jesus' laborious life.<sup>201</sup> It traces Jesus' ministry in Galilee and provides a picture "not by strict historical sequence, but by logic of the image he wishes to communicate about Jesus." Mark portrays Jesus as "a man of courage, commitment, and complete, active dedication to carrying out His mission here on earth."<sup>202</sup> An image that was extremely important to his audience that was enduring persecution.

Now Mark teaches as it relates to discipleship that true discipleship comes from an appreciation not so much of Christ's miracles as of the service and suffering that characterize His ministry and messiahship. Jesus is presented as reluctant to disclose his

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<sup>200</sup> Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 603.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

true nature to those who lack the understanding that comes from insight into his suffering. According to the New Interpreter's Study Bible, chapters 2:13-3:6, the parallel unit in this first section consists of one story (2:13-14) and four controversy stories that deal with situations related to eating. Because of the restrictive eating practices of many Jews as compared with most Gentiles (or non-Jews), meals and food itself were at the heart of many controversies within early Christianity.<sup>203</sup> This second controversy concerns the ritual practice of fasting and the observance of rituals in general.<sup>204</sup>

The Gospel of Mark, according to Ernest Best, was constructed for pastoral reasons, the second controversy becomes extremely informative for the intent of this project, which has as its focus a pastoral concern for a context that needs change in order for growth to expand. As fore stated, the text chosen as the focus of our exegesis was hewed out of a conversation that Jesus had with people who came and asked why John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast and his disciples did not fast. Jesus responded to their question by sharing what the bridegroom's attendants do while the bridegroom is there versus what the bridegroom's attendants do when the bridegroom is gone. Lamar Williamson, Jr. asserts that the image of Christ as bridegroom connotes in this Marcan passage joy in the presence of the Lord and celebration of the "already" dimension of the Kingdom of God. He also states that a second aspect of the bridegroom analogy unfolds in verse 20, which speaks of a coming time "when the bridegroom is taken away from them;" then the disciples will fast. This word of the Lord warrants the practice of fasting by Christians after Jesus' earthly ministry had ended. Fasting here connotes sorrow at the

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<sup>203</sup> Mary Ann Tolbert, *The New Interpreters Study Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1808.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 1809.

absence of the Lord and is appropriate to the “not yet” dimension of the Kingdom of God.<sup>205</sup> Also, from a social perspective, the counter question about the bridegroom sets those who propose fasting in a negative light. Since fasting was a public gesture of penance or mourning, guests who fasted during a wedding would appear to disapprove of the marriage. Their behavior would be perceived as a serious insult to the host.<sup>206</sup> No one thinks of fasting while a wedding is in progress.<sup>207</sup> William Lane states,

Can the bridal guests mourn during the bridal celebrations? The statement may be proverbial for any inappropriate action, since a wedding was a time of great joy and festivity, heralded by music and gala processions. To fast in the presence of the groom would be unthinkable. Although the image of the wedding feast was sometimes used by the rabbis to express the joy of the messianic era, neither in the OT nor in later Jewish literature was the Messiah represented as the bridegroom. It is important to stress this fact, for it indicates that Jesus’ statement would not have been recognized by his disciples or his adversaries as an explicitly messianic assertion. Jesus speaks of himself in an implicit, veiled manner because he has not yet spoken openly and in detail to his disciples about his distinctive mission (see Ch 8:32). The messianic significance of this use of the bridal image was understood only later. The central comparison between the wedding festivities and Jesus’ disciples lies in the joy, which they possess in their master. Jesus emphasizes this with his answer to the critical question. The reason for the fundamentally different position of his disciples is that ‘the bridegroom is with them,’ and in his presence they experience joy. Even on this veiled level of parabolic speech, something significant is said: an expression of sorrow is inappropriate to the new situation, which has come with Jesus’ presence.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching of Mark* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983), 69.

<sup>206</sup> Pheme Perkins, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: The Gospel of Mark* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 555.

<sup>207</sup> Williamson, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary*, 555.

<sup>208</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 109-110.

From that, Jesus shows that change of behavior is necessary when there is a change in the structure. It is out of that discussion that Jesus told the two parables that are the focus of this segment—new cloth sewn to old garment and new wine placed into old wine skin—in which Jesus showed the importance of change in order to grab hold to something new.

The two parables Jesus chose were common household illustrations. Jesus' audience knew that new cloth is not sewn onto an old coat because it will shrink more than the coat when it is washed and will tear away, and new wine is not put into old skins because old skins have no elasticity and as the wine ferments, the expanding gases will burst the skins.<sup>209</sup> The King James Version uses new, (*agnaphos*), as unfilled i.e. new cloth. In addition, cloth (*rhakos*), a rag i.e. a piece of cloth and old, (*palaios*), as antique i.e. not recent or worn out and it uses new as (*neoteros*) bottles, (*askos*) i.e. a leathern (or skin) a bag used as a bottle.<sup>210</sup> This researcher posits that both of the analogies would seem worthless to most modern readers. In this day of pre-shrunk synthetic blends, glass bottles, and mass produced plastic wrapped goods, wineskins and patches may not mean much to them. However, the Palestinians in Jesus' day would thoroughly understand because patching worn clothes and fermenting grape juice were common practices during that time. One can speculate from the context of the foundation scripture that Jesus seems to parallel understanding that He is different from that which people expected or maybe even wanted in the promised messiah. May the researcher add, that the Lord often used examples from everyday life to illustrate His renowned parables and in this particular

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).



parable, he uses two concepts that would have been readily understood by all of his listeners.

In the selected passage of scripture, according to William Barclay, Jesus knew how difficult it is for the minds of men to accept and to entertain new truth; and here he uses two illustrations to show how necessary it is to have an adventurous mind.<sup>211</sup>

He speaks of the danger of sewing a patch on an old garment. The word used means that the new cloth was still undressed; it had never been shrunk; so when the garment got wet in the rain the new patch shrunk, and being much stronger than the old, it tore the old part. There comes a time when the day of patching is over, and recreating must begin.

Wine was kept in wineskins. There was no such thing as a bottle in our sense of the term. When these skins were new they had a certain elasticity; as they grew old they became hard and unyielding. New wine is still fermenting; it gives off gases; these gases cause pressure; if the skin is new it will yield to the pressure, but if it is old and hard and dry it will explode and wine and skin alike will be lost. Jesus is pleading for certain elasticity in our minds. It is fatally easy to become set in our own ways.<sup>212</sup>

According to PHEME PERKINS, the reader learns that Jesus cannot be comprehended by the inherited religious categories.<sup>213</sup>

According to James Brooks, the twin parables here teach the incompatibility of the old (scribal Judaism) and the new (Christianity). Judaism is the old garment and the old wineskins. Christianity is the new garment (implied), the new wineskin, and the new

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<sup>211</sup> William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series, The Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1979), 60.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>213</sup> Perkins, *The New Interpreters Bible*, 556.

wine. The point is not that the “old” is wrong or evil but that its time has passed.<sup>214</sup>

Noticing when the time has passed is something that a church must pay attention to in order to employ the new method that the generation which the church is ministering to understands. When David was made king of the Northern and Southern each tribe gave David a gift. Basically, each tribe gave men to fight in his army with the exception of the tribe of Issachar. The tribe of Issachar gave David men who could discern the time. The researcher clearly understands that the discerning of the times by the tribe of Issachar was according to God’s sovereign wisdom. David is definitely in need of warriors, soldiers and loyal friends in this time of adversity. However, he also needed men with political discernment and the tribe of Issachar served that purpose. There is always the need for someone with the gift of discernment to determine if, where, when and how. According to God’s sovereign wisdom, he had a season and a time for all his purposes and for the fulfillment of his promises. That is what Solomon is referring to in Ecclesiastes.<sup>215</sup> The researcher contends Isaiah may even refer to times such as this as crucially important in God’s redemptive purpose. Listen to his call for change in chapter 43:18-19 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing.”<sup>216</sup>

Gary L. McIntosh in *One Size Doesn’t Fit All*,

As he refers to the small church, the group determines its identity from its past, which is carried on by tradition with a certain rhythm and sense of permanence. In a sense, the past is always present. Thus, words like change and creativity are enemies since the church cannot imagine doing things differently. Its goal is not so much to change the world, as it is to know each other better<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> James A. Brooks, *The American Commentary Volume 23* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992).

<sup>215</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV

<sup>216</sup> Isaiah 43:18-91

<sup>217</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 31.

The researcher admits being spiritually captivated with the Gospel of Mark concerning the second chapter, verse 22. Here Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, “no one puts new wine in old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled and wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.” In his book, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* by Ched Myers, he interprets the imagery used by Jesus as “apocalyptic dualism.” He writes:

‘New’ (*kainos*) is a term usually identified with eschatological re-Creation. Mark is here concerned to distinguish the radical social practice of the kingdom from the cosmetic social piety of the Pharisaic holiness code. The ‘young’ discipleship movement must not conform to a practice that looks novel, even progressive, but in truth is ‘old,’ meaning fundamentally aligned with the dominant symbolic order. To do so would be to jeopardize the messianic project, represented by the images of ‘the wine and skins will both be lost.’ The ‘new’ wine will later be revealed by Mark as the genuine social practice of nonviolent love (14:24).<sup>218</sup>

Ched Myers defines for us the moment in the church when Jesus is saying to the Pharisees that a new day is coming and a new kingdom must be established. Jesus is seemingly trying to explain a vision while the people are so accustomed to program after program that merely re-establishes the old order. Vision is necessary, the Bible says, according to Proverbs, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”<sup>219</sup>

Nevertheless, Jesus had come to fulfill the will of His Father and the normal outward pious form of the Pharisees would not characterize His ministry. The parables of new cloth and new wine seem to be saying metaphorically that new situations demand

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<sup>218</sup> Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 159.

<sup>219</sup> Prov 29:18

new rituals; the old cannot contain the new thing that is happening.<sup>220</sup> However, the general meaning is clear, that the good news of the kingdom is not to be enclosed in old forms.<sup>221</sup> The good news of Jesus can take on new methods without compromising the message of the Gospel. The message will always be the same but the method of delivery sometimes has to change in order to meet the needs of a changing world. In a rapidly changing society of modern science, advanced technology, and the information age, many rural churches like Clover Garden can benefit from this model of introducing change.

Now just what the compressed parable of the new wine in old skins referred to is not entirely clear, whether to fasting, sacrifices, or the whole tradition of the scribes. However, the general meaning is clear, that the good news of the kingdom is not to be enclosed in old forms.<sup>222</sup> The conclusion emphasizes the necessity of what is new.<sup>223</sup> Again, it is the contention of the researcher that the parable speaks to the struggle of the context of ministry involved in this project being unwilling to move from the man made rules and formulas to new forms of doing ministry that will address the current ways of experiencing God. As it relates to the scripture text, Bruce Shelley asserts that Stephen before he was stoned sensed deeply that even Christianity could never be confined to the rigid boundaries of the Pharisees' laws.<sup>224</sup> Christianity, in experiencing God, cannot be

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<sup>220</sup> Tolbert, *The New Interpreters Study Bible*, 1809.

<sup>221</sup> Halford E. Luccock, *The Interpreters Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1951), 677.

<sup>222</sup> Luccock, *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume 7*, 677.

<sup>223</sup> Perkins, *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume 8*, 556.

<sup>224</sup> Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1982), 29.

confined to any one particular formula. In fact, Jesus himself had hinted that a breach would open.<sup>225</sup> Bruce further states the most important development in first-century Christianity was the rip in the old wineskins.<sup>226</sup>

Although Jesus spoke those words 2000 years ago and specifically referenced the religious system of His day and time, but God has seen fit to incorporate them into His eternal word, which means they are relevant to any Christian, in any age. By the time of Christ's arrival, Judaism had become a rigid and inflexible system that was incapable of holding the new wine of the Spirit that God was about to pour out at Pentecost. The main reason that Judaism had become so rigid and inflexible was that it had become a religion that was based largely on tradition. As previously stated, the good news of the kingdom is not to be enclosed in old forms.<sup>227</sup>

It is not the intent of the researcher to ultimately abandon the traditions of the church because of this project. As indicated by Richards, "The old ways of viewing faith are worn out, unable to contain the new revelation Jesus brings."<sup>228</sup> One's faith and the practice of it have to be kept new and refreshing in order to discern what the will of God is in their lives so that they are not stuck in the old ways of doing things. Erwin McManus contends that once you belong to Jesus, change is inevitable. Our whole Christian experience is an experience of change. It is an experience of putting off the old

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Luccock, *The Interpreters Bible*, 677.

<sup>228</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion, Volume 2*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 114.

and putting on the new.<sup>229</sup> He further asserts that we must never forget that we serve the changeless God of change.<sup>230</sup>

The intent of this project was to introduce a transformational method to assist congregants in realizing that old ritualistic forms of ministry will not adequately suffice the needs of our present younger generation along with newcomers and the lost. McManus who also notes in everything that is about style and preference, the church must be willing to support change for the sake of those who are lost.<sup>231</sup>

Jesus told the Pharisees and the teachers of the law that they had let go of the commands of God and were holding on to the traditions of man.<sup>232</sup> Unfortunately, there was no plausible way for that situation to change because the leaders themselves were reluctant to change. This researcher hopes that because of this model of ministry the congregants will learn a broad scope of Jesus' perspective on change. Also, that they will be able to see and hear the voice of creativity, and see Jesus ministering in the context instead of dwelling on their way of doing things. Many people, Christians included, prefer things to remain the same because they feel comfortable and secure with what they know and what they have become accustomed to. Change often involves stepping out into the unknown and not everyone is willing to take that step but God does not stand still (even if one does) and His church must be open and flexible to the leading of His Spirit if it is to fulfill its purpose on earth. The theological foundation for this model follows.

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<sup>229</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to become the Church God had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing Company, 2001), 81.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>232</sup> Mark 7:8 NIV

## THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

According to the renowned theologian Paul Tillich, “A theological system is supposed to satisfy two basic needs: The statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation.”<sup>233</sup>

The guiding theological premise of this ministerial project is grounded on the variations of Black Theology. It is the argument of the writer that God is greatly concerned about the inclusiveness of all of His people as the key to a meaningful ministry to introduce change, to bridge the generational gap, and to empower individual congregations.

Frederick Ware outlines three schools of Black Theology; Black Hermeneutics, Black Philosophy, and Human sciences. The Black Hermeneutical perspective had the largest number of scholars with such notables as Katie Canon, James Cone, Dwight Hopkins and Gayraud Wilmore. Their basic analytical framework is based on the assumption that liberation is defined by biblical conceptions of God’s liberating activity and black folk stories of freedom. Their ontological assumptions are non-foundationalist based on biblical, communal, and personal conceptions of Christian faith that views Jesus Christ as the black Messiah and privileges the concepts of blackness and liberation.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, their goal is to foster those moral and ethical actions that will achieve

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<sup>233</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume I* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1951), 3.

<sup>234</sup> Frederick Ware, *Methodologies of Black Theology* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2002), xvi.

liberation.<sup>235</sup> However, the researcher's philosophy is closer to the Black Hermeneutical School of Black Theology.

A functional theological foundation becomes instrumental in understanding the urgent need to address the failure of the rural church to implement change. Thus, its role is to become mobilized in its ministry to the congregation, as well as to newcomers and strangers alike, who desire to be a part of the fellowship. In *Ministry for Social Change: Theology and Praxis in the Black Church Tradition*, Forrest E. Harris, Sr. has provided a good operational definition of theology and its implications for God's people, as follows:

Theology is the process of reflecting upon God's involvement in human life. Although an academic discipline, it is also the way any person appropriates the faith. In a real sense, all of us are theologians, for theology is the only way that reason and faith embrace each other. Every Christian is a theologian! It is our duty, as faithful believers, to-do theology. To do theology means to make an effort to understand, declare, and live out who God is, what God demands, and what God has done and is doing now for our salvation. Then, in light of that theology, that is the knowledge of ourselves, God, and the world, we must respond in faith, love, and obedience. Theology in this sense is the work of the whole church and the individual member of every congregation.<sup>236</sup>

The writer also notes that it is impossible to engage in a discussion regarding black theology without also broaching the subject of black liberation theology, which Harris contends is the process of reflecting upon our story as black people. This manifestation revolves around an understanding of the God who hears the groans of those

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Forrest E. Harris, Sr., *Ministry for Social Change: Theology and Praxis Black Church Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 118.



in bondage and comes to deliver them from oppression. This deliverance calls for the oppressed to become involved as agents of their own salvation.<sup>237</sup>

One approach for the interpretation of Scripture is presented by Liberation Theology, which is based on the Exodus motif.<sup>238</sup> Exodus identifies the Bible's central theme as "liberation." This suggests that God's mission in the world is to set humanity free from bondage. In Jamie Phelps' essay on *Black Liberation Theology*, the author emphasizes that the central theme of the unity of the human community is the teleological focus on black liberation theology.<sup>239</sup> He writes that black liberation theology has called the Church to become a model of the pattern of relationship that it seeks to establish in the world. It challenges all churches to refute the dehumanization of blacks and all oppressed peoples within their communities as they assist them in their struggle to obtain full freedom and equality in society. This challenge of black liberation theology makes clear that the final goal is identical with the ultimate goal of communion. At the 1985 synod, the bishops focused on intra-ecclesial communion, ecumenical communion, and the social challenges facing society. These foci suggest that commitment to justice, peace, a freedom of men and women, and to a new civilization of love, is a fundamental perspective for the Church as communion.<sup>240</sup>

Commitment to communion is integrally related to commitment to liberation. Human freedom or liberation is a precondition of ethical living since an individual race or

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>238</sup> Exodus 12: 31-51 NKJ

<sup>239</sup> Jamie T. Phelps, "Communion Ecclesiology and Black Liberation Theology," *Theological Studies* Volume 61, Issue 4 (2000): 672.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

group of people cannot form an authentic visible community unless they are free. Phelps further contends that liberating the Church and society from the interpersonal and socially unjust structures and patterns of relationship that oppress and divide the human community is an essential aspect of evangelization.<sup>241</sup> The researcher contends exclusiveness and non-involvement of the younger generation tends to oppress and divide the generations. Thus, congregants that feel excluded or isolated become frustrated and unable to control their own destiny or have a significant effect on the ministry as a whole.

The silence of most theologians on the issue of racism and the United States black theology of liberation speaks volumes. Contrast this to the number of white theologians who engage and teach the theology of Gutierrez and other liberation theologians in Latin America.<sup>242</sup>

Examining the meaning and mission of the Church from the perspective of black liberation theology can both strengthen and challenge the theological understanding of “communion.” Black liberation ecclesiology, according to Cone, insists, “The Church is that people called into being by the power and love of God to share in his revolutionary activity for the liberation of man . . . the Church . . . consists of people who have been seized by the Holy Spirit and who have the determination to live as if all depends on God. It has no will of its own, only God’s will; it has no duty of its own, only God’s duty. Its existence is grounded in God.”<sup>243</sup> Therefore, the Church of Christ is not bounded by standards of race, class, or occupation. The black liberation ecclesiology of James Cone

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Harper and Row, 1969), 63, 65.

has emphasized that the Church as the Body of Christ must exhibit five characteristics: it must suffer with the suffering;<sup>244</sup> it must proclaim the kerygma of liberation to blacks and oppressed peoples and nations as the liberating message of God's reign, confronting the world with the reality of Christian freedom;<sup>245</sup> it must join in the struggle for liberation against the political, economic and social systems that contradict the Good News of Jesus' liberating activity;<sup>246</sup> it must be in its own community what it preaches and what it seeks to accomplish in the world, it must be a visible manifestation that the gospel is a reality;<sup>247</sup> and it must challenge both black and white churches to refute the dehumanization of blacks and all oppressed peoples in their own communities as they struggle with them to obtain full freedom and equality in the society.<sup>248</sup>

Cone's understanding of the liberation assignment of the church expands to include not only those oppressed because of race, but also includes a theology of liberation for those oppressed because of class, gender, culture and age within the Christian Church.<sup>249</sup> This writer contends exclusiveness because of age in this context of ministry is a call for liberation. Cone posits that the church must be on the side of the poor, because Jesus was for the poor. Cone also includes in his understanding of the poor not only the black poor in America but also the poor all over the world.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>247</sup> James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1970), 131-32.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 132-135.

<sup>249</sup> James Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1982), 93-94, 99-108.

<sup>250</sup> Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 120.

Phelps puts forth that many are questioning the relevance and necessity of liberation theology or pronounce its death with the emergence of contextual and global theology.<sup>251</sup> The researcher's perspective is that liberation theology will cease to be necessary when and only when all men and women are free of sinful barriers that oppress. Then and only then will our world truly image the unity in diversity that characterizes the total nature of God. Only then will we be embraced into the oneness for which Jesus prayed in fulfillment of his mission to lead all creation back to the fullness of communion with God, with one another and with all creation.

Dwight Hopkins posits,

The black Church begins in slavery; thus, slave religion provides the first source for a contemporary statement on black theology. The black church's unique tradition springs from the emerging theology of African American chattel. While white masters attempted to force their Christianity onto their black property, slaves worshipped God secretly. Out of these illegal and hidden religious practices, the 'Invisible Institution' black Christianity and black Theology arose. Though chained and illiterate, black people dared to think theologically by testifying to what the God of Moses had done for them.<sup>252</sup>

According to Cone, Black Theology is a theology of liberation simply because it is a theology that arises from the identification with the gospel of Christ in the light of the black condition. He believes that the liberation of black people is God's liberation.<sup>253</sup>

Cone noted several years earlier that the omission of the history of the black experience suggests, "The black experience is not and has never been regarded as

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<sup>251</sup> Phelps, *Communion Ecclesiology and Black Liberation Theology*.

<sup>252</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins and George C. L. Cummings, eds., *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narrative* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>253</sup> Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 23.

essential to the life of the church.”<sup>254</sup> As to this project of bridging the generational gap and empowering the people, the researcher finds it hard to accept that the black experience has never been regarded as essential to the life of the church. According to Henry H. Mitchell, in his book, *Black Church Beginnings*, the black church is still evolving from African traditional religion.<sup>255</sup> The researcher contends that the evolving from African traditional religion is certainly a black church experience. He goes on to state that it is seen, to some extent, in the way the churches of the masses still resist the removal of the senior members from office no matter how feeble they may be. (Of course, power is also an issue.)<sup>256</sup>

Cone states, black theology focuses on black history as a source for its theological interpretation of God’s work in the world because divine activity is inseparable from the history of black people. There can be no comprehension of black theology without realizing that its existence comes from a community, which looks back on its unique past, visualizes the reality of the future, and then makes decisions about possibilities in the present.<sup>257</sup> The researcher concludes that the objectives of this project will be realized when the congregants look back on their past and realize all that has been accomplished would not have occurred if their ancestors had not worked together. Working together is a critical component of bridging any gap whether it is generational or

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<sup>254</sup> James H. Cone, *A Theological Challenge to the American Catholic Church: In Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation and Black Theology I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 57.

<sup>255</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 15.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 59.

otherwise. The possibilities for the present as well as the future are many if the church comes together on one accord. The use of black theology as a framework for this project utilizes components that relate to black history and how God intervenes on behalf of his people as a community.

It is this researcher's hope to assist the congregation of the rural church and others in understanding the powerful implications of exclusion as a form of oppression and apply corrective measures before additional damage can be done to this growing fellowship. It is essential that we acknowledge that all parties involved share in this exclusion and alienation. Therefore, one must seek ways to divorce oneself from this practice and simultaneously begin a process of reconciliation, which is the major work that God desires for one in Christ Jesus.<sup>258</sup> For He (Christ) is our peace, in His flesh has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.<sup>259</sup>

A personal theology of the entire people of God includes both Biblical and historical perspectives. The writer's theology reflects the following premises:

1.) God is the author and creator of diversity in the midst of unity. This foundational view focuses on each person as a unique creation of God with diverse but individual gifts, abilities, and life roles. Diverse individuals who are meant to unite, one with another, to fulfill and accomplish the divine purpose of the Church. 2.) God creates each person to embody the divine nature of servant hood. This nature provides a complete picture of how all parts of the body coexist and collaborate to function individually, yet

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<sup>258</sup> T. Richard Snyder, *Once You Were No People: The Church and the Transformation of Society* (Bloomington, IN: Stone Books, 1988), xiv-xv.

<sup>259</sup> Eph. 2:14

communally, to meet the needs of the host. As Christians serve other people of God and the world, they reach the completeness of the body of life. 3.) Leaders make a conscious and personal choice to embrace the Biblical leadership methodology of developing people to fulfill their divine calling. This paradigm shift must begin with leaders or the chasm of separation between the work of God and the people of God will continue. This transition requires the leader to acknowledge the Who before the what.

The statement of truth in the black church according to J. Deotis Roberts, is that God reveals God's self within the black experience. To the black man God reveals Himself as the God of the Exodus, of restoration, of prophecy, of the cross-resurrection event. God is a God of liberation and Christ is the liberator.<sup>260</sup>

The noted Father of Black Theology, James Cone, wrote,

Christianity is essentially a religion of liberation. The function of theology is that of analyzing the meaning of liberation for the oppressed so they can know that their struggle for political, social, economic, and spiritual justice is consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the second edition, he further expounds on that definition when he writes,

Theology is not the universal language about God. Rather it is human speech informed by historical and theological traditions and written for particular times and places. Theology is contextual language, which is defined by the human situation that gives birth to it.<sup>261</sup>

Cone also contends, the Church, as a fellowship, is a visible manifestation; that the Gospel is a reality.

If the Church cannot be free, it is a distorted representation of the eruption of God's kingdom; if it lives according to the old order (as

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<sup>260</sup> J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Theology in the Making* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 121.

<sup>261</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), vii, i.

it usually has), then no one will believe its message. If someone declares that Christ has set man free from all alien loyalties, but he, himself obeys these loyalties that he claims 'Christ has defeated', then it must be concluded that he does not really believe what he says. To believe is to live accordingly; the Church must live according to its preaching. This is what Bonhoeffer had in mind when he called the Church 'Christ existing as a community.'<sup>262</sup>

This writer uses these definitions as a point of reference to support this particular project, to introduce change as it relates to the younger generation by being excluded from full participation in the ministry of the Church. This generation struggles to understand the theological perspective of love for all as is embodied in the person of Christ. Throughout history, individuals have encountered exclusion or alienation in extreme situations. However, it seems that during these perilous times in history, such individuals used their collective energies and talents to fight social change within the context of their oppressed community. Theology arises from a context; black theology arises from the position of an oppressed community centered on Jesus Christ believing that the Black community is where Jesus is at work. A revelation aspect of the Gospels reveal that Jesus came to liberate the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized and those who stood with their backs against the walls of the oppressors. In Jesus' words written in the Gospel of Luke: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and

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<sup>262</sup> Martin E. Marty, Peter Berger, George Forell, Reginald Fuller, Walter Harrelson, Franklin Littell, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Franklin Sherman, eds., *The Place of Bonhoeffer: Problems and Possibilities in His Thought* (New York: Association Press, 1962) 51, *Questia*, 11 Sept. 2007 <<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=239683>>.



recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”<sup>263</sup>

Black theology in the 21st Century identifies God’s action within the plight of the African American community and is therefore a theology for all black people who are oppressed. The rise of black theology in the seventies validated African Americans in the Christian context and gave them a sense of identity with the historical Jesus, thereby grounding them in the center of a theology of liberation. This serves as a point of departure from the traditional theological claims of dominant culture.<sup>264</sup>

The late Howard Thurman, one of the great African American theologians and preachers of the 20th Century, recounted how his grandmother, who was a slave, reacted negatively to the services conducted by the owner’s white minister, but positively to those conducted by the slave preacher. Howard gave this report:

It did not matter what the text was, the minister always ended up at the same place . . . He would stand up, start very quietly and then look around at all of us in the room and then he would say, ‘You are not slaves, you are not niggers, you are God’s children.’<sup>265</sup>

Thurman points to the pride that the experience instilled in his grandmother’s heart and the seriousness with which he and his sister heard her recount it as they sat at her knee during their childhood. It is also the contention of the writer that they are all God’s children and all on equal ground in order that exclusion would not be a part of the family of God.

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<sup>263</sup> Luke 4:18-19 NKJ

<sup>264</sup> Roberts, *Black Theology in the Making*, 119.

<sup>265</sup> Edward L. Long, Jr., *Black Theology and Blacks on Campus, Black Theology II* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1978), 57.

In the writer's context, the telling of the stories of the past were encouraged to be told to the younger generation by the older congregants in order to bridge the gap by keeping the continuity of the faith community, thereby making a connection to that past.

Julian Kunnie contends,

Black Theology will be relevant only if it speaks directly to the daily experiences of oppressed black people particularly black working class and the black underclass. In order to do so, it must evolve an indigenous methodology that is rooted in black culture and history. One of the principal forms of doing black theology that has functioned historically to ensure the relations of the sacred ways of the ancestors and that is also instructive for social transformation is the black folk tale.<sup>266</sup>

Kunnie also quotes Stanley Hauerwas, a Canadian Christian ethicist, who contends that "loss of narrative implies loss of community" and that "good and just societies require a narrative . . . which helps them to know the truth about existence and fight the constant temptation to self-deception."<sup>267</sup>

Joseph Johnson, Jr. in his book, *Jesus, The Liberator*, eloquently demonstrates the need for black theology, which illustrates the reason the researcher chose black theology as the theological framework for the ministry model. He observed that,

The tragedy of the interpretations of Jesus by the white American theologian during the last three hundred years is that Jesus has been often identified with the oppressive structures and forces of the prevailing society. His teachings have been used to justify wars, exploitation of the poor and oppressed peoples of the world. In his name, the most vicious form of racism has been condoned and advocated. In a more tragic sense, this Jesus of the white church establishment has been white, straight-haired, blue-eyed, Anglo-Saxon; that is, presented in the image of the oppressor. This 'whiteness' has prevailed to the extent that the black, brown, or red peoples of the world, who has accepted Jesus as Lord and

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40. <sup>266</sup> Julian Kunnie, *Model of Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994),

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

Savior, were denied full Christian fellowship in his church and were not accepted as brothers for whom Jesus died.<sup>268</sup>

The researcher has discovered a serious limitation of the European American theologian's interpretation of Christian theology, namely, that it does not offer the resurrection power of Jesus that is needed to minister to all races, creeds, economic backgrounds, and status that demands we all come together as one in Christ thereby bridging the generational gap. According to Johnson, the limitations of many conventional theologians stems from the fact that they have never been lowered into the murky depth and reality of the black experience. They never conceived the black Jesus walking the dark streets of the ghettos of the North and the sharecropper's farm in the Deep South without a job, busted and emasculated. They could never hear the voice of Jesus speaking in the dialect of blacks from the southern farms or in the idiom of the blacks of the ghetto. This severe limitation and inability to articulate the full meaning of the Christian faith in conventional theology has given rise to the development of black theology.<sup>269</sup>

As was mentioned at the outset of this paper, theology involves the study of God and the relationship that God might have with humans. The adopted theology profoundly affects the type of changes one might expect in the thoughts and actions of a believer, yet in all cases community "group life" is affected in one way or another.

For example, someone committed to liberation theology might be expected to immediately begin to work toward alleviating the plight of the oppressed as part of their

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<sup>268</sup> Joseph Johnson, Jr., *Jesus, the Liberator, Black Theology, Volume I* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 194.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

responsibility to their community of fellow humans. It is only as they would work from this commitment to the oppressed that they would begin to understand the mind of God. Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff says, “translating this truth of faith into social terms, we can say: ‘the Trinity is our true social programme,’” and later restates, “this view, however, concentrates too much on human individuality. In the Bible, people are essentially social beings—in communion. Living a human life always means living with others; it is in the exercise of co-humanity that an individual is fully personalized . . . Therefore, humanity becomes an image of the Trinity through establishing community and relationships of giving and receiving.”<sup>270</sup> The goal of this theology in terms of behavior is that people share with and care for other people, particularly those who are less fortunate, especially in the local church. People today need the encouragement of others if they are to walk closely with the Lord.<sup>271</sup>

Paul writes to the Corinthians, “that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another . . . And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ’s body and individually members of it.”<sup>272</sup> He then goes on to mention various offices of service within the church in much the same way as he does in the letter to the Romans.

This clearly is a call to unity among believers, and it is that same unity which is desirable for the church universal and the local church, which should be modeled within

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<sup>270</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 16, 224.

<sup>271</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume XI* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1955), 713.

<sup>272</sup> I Corinthians 12:25-27 NASB

small groups such as the class leader system in the AME Church. Small-unified groups gathered for ministry has been utilized in the history of the church as well as the present and has been quite effective. The goal of this author is to continue to use this group process as a means of developing the transformational model of leadership and empowerment of the congregants.

Many other theologians have expressed the importance of supportive community. Concerning true community Rudolph Bultmann states, "To put it briefly, true human community is that between man and man; that is, and that community in which man finds himself devoting himself to his fellow men. Genuine human community is found only between men who reveal themselves to one another by being their true selves. In being themselves for each other and through others, the human community is found."<sup>273</sup>

Charles Hartshorne states, "Let us summarize our position. The divine attributes are abstract types of social relationship, of which the divine acts are concrete instances of relations."<sup>274</sup> The title of the chapter is "The Divine Attributes of Social Relationship," which points to the importance of Hartshorne for community and relationships.

Paul Tillich states, "the church, which stands for the power of being-itself of the God who transcends the God of the religions, claims to be the mediator of the courage to be."<sup>275</sup> As a mediator, there is a purpose for the church, as a group, to bring about the change Tillich is discussing, namely courage.

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<sup>273</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955), 292.

<sup>274</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 156.

<sup>275</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (Binghamton, NY: Yale University Press, 1952), 186.

H. Richard Niebuhr describes five possible relationships between those who call themselves Christians and the society in which they live, the first is that of opposition to the prevailing culture and its values. The second affirms a fundamental agreement between Christianity and the culture in question. The other three are variations between the pole of the first and second options.<sup>276</sup> The relationship between Christians and their culture is important.

In his book, *Search for the Beloved Community*, Kenneth Smith states concerning Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “As the emphasis on interrelatedness suggests, King’s conception of the Beloved Community assumed a theme mentioned throughout these pages, the social nature of human existence. The phrase King used to express this theme was “the solidarity of the human family.”<sup>277</sup> James Cone states concerning the black community as a group:

. . . from the experience of divine truth in our social existence, we now know that reconciliation must start first with black brothers and sisters who have suffered the pain of a broken community. Therefore as black theologians we must ask, not about our reconciliation with white oppressors, but about our reconciliation with each other. We must unmask social and political structures that make us kill and shoot each other.<sup>278</sup>

It is clear from the above quote that the church as the black community has a great, yet largely unrealized potential to encourage and build each other up. Again, relationships and community are important.

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<sup>276</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 40-43.

<sup>277</sup> Kenneth L. Smith, *Search for the Beloved Community, The Thinking of Martin Luther King Jr.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974), 121.

<sup>278</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 245.

Even Martin Buber, a Jewish theologian, states, “But community, growing community (which is all we have known so far) is the being no longer side by side but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it also moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the other, a flowing from I to Thou.”<sup>279</sup>

Many more theologians could have been cited, who have expounded on the importance of human relationships and the relationship they might enjoy with God, as it relates to transformational change in the church. It is sufficient to say that these theologians, from a variety of perspectives, agree on the importance of community as the church, relationships, and their power to bring about change and bridge the generational gap as well as change the congregants potentially for the better.

## SUMMARY

The reality by James Cone, Jamie Phelps, and Kenneth Smith in the researcher’s view is addressed by a black theology that is passionate and concerned about introducing transformational change, especially to bridge the generation gap in rural churches by expressing the importance of community and inclusiveness that will eliminate any further spiritual and physical disunity.

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<sup>279</sup> Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 31.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the methodology and the design of the Ministry Project used in the field experience. More specifically, this chapter provides an in-depth discussion into the purpose of the Ministry Project by examining the following factors: hypothesis, intervention (description of the Ministry Project), research design, measurement and instrumentation. The presentation of these items should provide the reader with a clear understanding of the perspectives, processes, and procedures with which the researcher began the project. This chapter will also discuss the reasons behind the chosen research methodologies.

#### **Purpose of the Ministry Project**

This model for ministry is a beginning point in a much longer journey. It was born out of a belief that change many times is essential to the life, health, and growth of the church. Dale Galloway wrote; “It is God’s will and purpose that your church should be a growing church and that you personally, along with fellow Christians, should learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in making this a reality.”<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the project was to develop a model of transformational change that will bridge the generation gap, empower the congregants and transform the organizational structure and leadership philosophies of the church. All members of the

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<sup>1</sup> Dale E. Galloway, *20/20 Vision: How to create a Successful Church with Lay Pastors and Cell Groups* (Portland, OR: Scott Publishing Company, 1986), 9.



church should be able to participate in, contribute to, and/or lead the decision-making processes of the church.

Therefore, the fundamental objective of the methodology is to introduce change that will engage the congregants into becoming change agents that will allow for growth and inclusion on all levels. These methods will bridge the generation gap, empower the congregants and transform the organizational structure.

The project was developed around the action research model as established by Jean McNiff, Pamela Lomax and Jack Whitehead. These authors have put together a document that guides one through the action research process. This form of research involves research done by individuals themselves into their own practices. Action research is then used as a vehicle for improving the quality of life in one's own social context. The authors further contend that well-conducted action research can lead to personal development, better professional practice, improvements in ones institution, as well as contribute to the good order of society.<sup>2</sup>

Action research refers to the conjunction of three elements: research, action, and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process cannot be called Action Research. Put another way, action research is a form of research that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social change and social analysis. But the social change we refer to is not just any kind of change. Action Research aims to increase the ability of the involved community or organization members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jean McNiff, Pamela Lomax, and Jack Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research Project* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1998), 6.

The researcher has selected action research because it encourages research, participation and action. The balance of these three elements provides the researcher with a more comprehensive and realistic analysis of the problem and real solutions to address the problem. In other words, it provides a qualitative analysis of the problem. The qualitative approach is more effective for the Ministry Model because, as Jackie Baston noted in his lecture, *Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, it “involves the examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships.”<sup>4</sup> The researcher has selected a qualitative research approach for the Ministry Project because as Dr. Baston has explained, “it develops theory, multiple realities: the focus is complex and broad, facts are value-laden and biased, discovery, description, understanding, shared interpretation, and the report is rich narrative, individual interpretation.”<sup>5</sup> The researcher has concluded that these dynamic elements provide the best tools to create a Ministry Project that is relevant and responsive to problems in the researcher’s ministry context. As Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin, noted in their book, *Introduction to Action Research*, the qualitative research approach allows the researcher to be “a democratic reformer rather than a revolutionary in the researcher’s ministry context.”<sup>6</sup> This is the researcher’s aim and objective.

It was the intent of the researcher to use this form of research to gain a better understanding of what was occurring at Clover Garden African Methodist Episcopal Church with the hope of making the necessary adjustments for ministry change. The

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<sup>4</sup> Jackie Baston, “*Quantitative and Qualitative Research Lecture*” (lecture, United Theological Seminary, August 2, 2005), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Greenwood and Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, 7-8.

researcher observed that what was occurring in the congregation was two churches within a church. The division was: a) the church wishing to keep things the way they were, and b) the church consisting of a new generation with new energies and ideas that were not being utilized. It became apparent that the new congregants and the younger generation now required a more involved role in the operations of the church's work and ministry. Clover Garden had become a church fearful of any kind of change that would cause them to lose their familiar nature. Their desire was to remain as they had been though it was not effective for growth or empowerment. As a result, these conflicting feelings affected their spiritual growth and empowerment. McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead also contend that action research involves individuals other than the researcher. Therefore, this researcher understands how important it is to involve the people of Clover Garden in this action research project.<sup>7</sup>

Although action research is similar to other forms of research, some differences make this the best form of research for this project.

Action research shares the following characteristics with other research:

- It leads to knowledge.
- It provides evidence to support this knowledge.
- It makes explicit the process of enquiry through which knowledge emerges.
- It links new knowledge with existing knowledge.

Action research is different from other research because:

- It requires action as an integral part of the research process itself.
- It is focused by the researcher's professional values rather than methodological considerations.

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<sup>7</sup> McNiff, *You and Your Action Research Project*, 10-11.

-It is necessary for the researcher to be an insider, in the sense of practitioners researching their own professional actions<sup>8</sup>

A major part of this research was also educational for this researcher in the sense of professional self-development. This action research process required one to ask questions for which one did not know the answers in an effort to learn something new. As a result, the researcher found that she had to change what she was doing. That is, the researcher changed the way that officers were appointed to include members of the younger generation and developed a mentoring system that was designed to facilitate interactions and support between the younger and older generations. "It becomes very important that the action researcher be willing and able to change his/her own understanding of the issue of focus. It also becomes important for the researcher to show how this research has influenced his/her thinking and understanding, as well as the social situation."<sup>9</sup>

### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this study is that when given an opportunity for all generations of the congregation to actively share in the planning and the work of ministry collectively, the generation gap will be bridged, the congregants will be empowered and the organizational structure will be changed. This study was designed to develop the Model of Transformational Change that is proposed by the researcher to facilitate the bridging of the generation gap, empowerment of the congregants and insure that all church organizations are inclusive. The model of transformational change is based on the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 13.

action research model that can be found in Appendix A. There are five stages of this study: Stage I: Assessment/ Identification of the Problem; Stage II: Design a Methodology; Stage III: Conduct Research; Stage IV: Analysis of Data and Stage V: Recommendations and Changes.

### **Intervention (Description of Ministry Project)**

Clover Garden AME Church located in Burlington, North Carolina is a rural church, which dates back to 1880. It was started in one of the homes of a community resident. It has a current membership roll of 175 congregants, which includes 30 children under the age of 16. However, Sunday worship attendance is generally 75-100 congregants. The majority of the members live in the immediate community in zip code 21217 within two to six miles of the church. The remaining members are dispersed all over Alamance County with a few families from Greensboro, North Carolina approximately twenty miles away and one family from Winston-Salem, North Carolina approximately fifty five miles away. The congregants exhibit strong family values and are a family conscious church. The researcher attributes these characteristics to the fact that the church is made up of approximately three to four families related either biologically or by marriage. An area of the researcher's concern is the fact that the official leadership of the church has changed very little during the last ten to fifteen years. As a result, the core leadership of the church centers on a few families who are very influential in most matters pertaining to the growth of the church. Disengagement is observed in the life of the church as it relates to the involvement of ministry on the part of members between the ages of 10-60, which is troubling for this researcher. During many

discussions with the context associates a certain detachment to the ministry that resulted in feelings of isolation and resentment on behalf of many members were revealed and has since resulted in a lack of growth. As more individuals migrate from the inner cities and urban centers of society into the suburban and rural areas of the countryside, there is a tremendous ministry opportunity for the rural churches within these communities. If an effective transformation is to be brought about within the hearts and minds of the people within the rural context of ministry, the church, as a whole, is in dire need of restoration and renewal.

### **Research Design**

This research design is based on the Triangulation Design Model, which is frequently used in primary care research. This model requires that the researcher reconcile and bring together numeric (quantitative) and text (qualitative) data. The intent of this model is to triangulate or gather both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, and to integrate the two forms of data to best understand a research problem. This model typically gives equal priority to quantitative and qualitative data. Then analysis involves concurrent or simultaneous collection of data and integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in the results, interpretation, or conclusion phase.

The quantitative data in this study was gathered during the Assessment Focus Group. This focus group data was then used to develop the pretest and posttest (quantitative analysis) that was administered to the congregation at Clover Garden A.M.E. Church. The qualitative data are the treatments, which were: Cultural Focus Groups, the workshops and sermons were presented and evaluated. The congregants that

participated were volunteers or a self-selected group that desired change in the church.

Please note Appendix B Table 2: Demographic Information of 39 Participants for a more in-depth description of the study participants.

### **Measurements: T-Test and Paired T-Test**

The data analysis section of the method section includes the selection of the appropriate statistics to examine the research questions. T-Test and Paired-T test were selected because of the small and non-random sample and the desire to gather descriptive statistics. The pretest and posttest were analyzed using T-Test.

### **Instruments: Pre and Post Test Surveys**

These instruments were designed based on the data gained from the following: assessment focus groups, information found in the literature review, and the Action Research Model. The researcher analyzed the qualitative data and used this information to develop an instrument for data collection. The intent of this study was to develop an instrument that was grounded in the views of participants rather than use an off-the-shelf instrument that might not reflect the views of Clover Garden AME Church.

### **Summary**

The researcher expected to create a Ministry Project, which provided a foundation for the development of inclusiveness among new, existing and intergenerational members of the church. Such a model was to provide for the existing members a feeling of inclusiveness that would create a motivation within them to continue, as well as work with existing members in accomplishing the goals of the church. This model would allow

the congregants to become change agents that would allow for growth and inclusion on all levels in order for the church to survive the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This chapter has provided an examination of the methodology and the design of the Ministry Project, along with its necessary components: hypothesis, intervention (description of the Ministry Project), research design, measurement, and instrumentation. The analysis of these items has provided the reader with a clear understanding of what the researcher started with when the project began and how the outcomes were obtained and evaluated.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

This chapter presents the results of the model and explicates the new knowledge gained about the ministry context in light of the research questions. The results of the model are examined through the collection of data, an analysis of data, and those outcomes. This study was designed to develop the Model of Transformational Change and is found in Appendix A, which will facilitate the bridging of the generation gap, empowerment of the congregants and insure that all church organizations are inclusive. There are five stages in the model and five stages of this study. The study design is as follows:

#### **Stage I. Identification/ Assessment of the Problem**

The first stage, involves the researcher addressing the congregation and sharing the beginning of the Doctoral Program and the selection of a project that would introduce transformational change to bridge the generation gap. This stage also involved meeting with the board and heads of other organizations and administering a pretest survey based on information garnered from these meetings.

The discussions occurred on two consecutive Sunday mornings in the spring of 2005 following the morning worship service when the congregation was asked to remain in order for the researcher to share the extent of the project and the need for their involvement. The survey was administered two Sundays after the discussions. First, the

researcher asked eight questions of the congregants to stimulate a discussion designed to identify what areas should be examined. These areas were to be considered as pressing issues that needed to be embarked upon in taking the church through the transformational change to bridge the generation gap.

The following questions were posed to the group: Questions are found in Appendix A.

1. What are you as a member looking for from the church? Expectations, etc.?
2. Do you think there needs to be change in the church?
3. Do you think change will assist in the growth of the church?
4. Will you be a part of bringing about positive change?
5. What is your prevailing attitude toward the church with regard to inclusiveness?
6. Do you feel that you contribute to the functions of the church?
7. Does the pastor's model of ministry empower you to become involved in the church?
8. Does the church have a plan for growth and development and have you seen that plan?

The information generated from the discussion of these eight questions resulted in the development and implementation of the pretest survey. This survey was administered before the (treatments) Cultural Focus Groups, workshops and sermons.

Second, the researcher held discussions with the boards and organizations. Fifty-five people attended this meeting. Those boards and organizations included the Stewards, Trustees, Stewardesses, Class Leaders and Missionaries. These boards were chosen because they are considered to be the leadership centers in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This meeting was designed to provide the boards with more

information about the study. It created interactive discussions between these groups to assure that specific information regarding the project would be both assimilated and disseminated properly to all the congregants. Therefore, the information gathered would be used to develop a survey useful in the assessment of the entire congregation. The survey was prepared as a result of common concerns relating to the need for transformational change.

### Cultural Focus Groups as an Assessment

Third, the researcher developed guidelines and implemented Cultural Focus Groups as a further assessment. They were called Cultural Focus Groups because of the diversity in age and life experiences. The Class Leaders of the church hosted the focus groups. The Class Leader system in the AME Church is a system of connectedness between congregants and the pastor with one of the duties being to watch over the probationers (new members) with special care and assist in the teaching of the Doctrine and Discipline of the church. According to the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Class Leaders are appointed annually and they shall serve for one year and may be appointed as long as their conduct is satisfactory.

### **The Class**

- 1) Number: A class is usually composed of twelve or more persons.
- 2) Purpose: A class is formed to discern whether its members are indeed working out their own salvation and to receive what they contribute to the support of the Gospel. One of the persons assigned to each class is the class leader.

Duties of class leaders are:

- 1) To meet the members in class once a week, to inquire how each soul prospers, to visit their members from time to time and to receive what they are willing to contribute for the support of the Gospel
- 2) To read the rules of Band Societies to those who meet with the class for the first time;
- 3) To visit other classes frequently;
- 4) To converse with their pastors frequently and freely;
- 5) To admit non-members to their class meeting no more than three times, with none of them to be consecutive;
- 6) To exclude, suspend, and expel members from the class meeting
- 7) To watch over probationers with special care and recommend those who are eligible at the end of ninety (90) days for full membership, upon their profession of saving faith in the Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ;
- 8) To report to the Official board: (a) those who are sick, (b) those who walk disorderly and will not be reproved, (c) the amount of money collected for the support of the Gospel, paying the same to the stewards;
- 9) To serve as leaders for children's classes. Such leaders shall perform the duties as outlined above and, in addition, give instruction in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: A. M. E. Publishing House, 2004), 73-74.

The Cultural Focus Group format was chosen with the Class Leaders as hosts or moderators because it allowed for open discussion among the participants in an informal session. It further captured information most likely missed in a survey. The moderators took notes and the participants agreed that the session should be recorded. It was also used to identify eight areas important to the inclusiveness of all members of the church. Additionally, it was useful in that the congregants were able to build upon one another's responses to further reveal their inner feelings and convictions.

The use of the Cultural Focus Groups allowed the researcher to bring together members of four generations in a format of dialogue with each other just to discuss their feelings and ideas about how things are culturally different today from previous years. This allowed for informal communication with each other where freedom of expression was further encouraged without the presence of the pastor. The researcher allowed for a two-hour time span on Wednesday nights. In the researcher's context as well as most rural churches, everything revolves around food. The participants agreed to bring covered dishes indicative of their generational favorites. The older generation brought some of their old fashion dishes and the younger generation brought some of their contemporary dishes and everyone shared in the various foods. During the open discussions the older generation talked about what they did in the past while the younger generation shared their hopes of what they wanted to see currently done now and in the future. The discussions revolved around the eight questions listed under, Intervention (Description of Ministry Project) in Table 5. The questions can be found listed in Appendix A. The notes taken during the focus group session were transposed and developed into evaluation forms. These evaluation forms were entrusted to all attendees at the end of the group

session and each member was asked to fill them out and pass them back to the proctor before leaving. These evaluation forms may be found in Appendix G for review.

## **Stage II: Design a Methodology**

### **Research Methodology**

This research methodology is based on the Triangulation Design Model, which as stated before is frequently used in primary care research. This model requires the bringing together of both numeric which is quantitative data and text which is qualitative data for the researcher to reconcile. The intent is to gather both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and then to integrate the two forms of data to best understand a research problem. This model typically considers the quantitative and qualitative data equal in measure. Then analysis involves concurrent or simultaneous collection of data by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to receive the conclusion. The quantitative data in this study was gathered during the Assessment Focus group. This focus group data was then used to develop the pretest and posttest (quantitative analysis) that was administered to the congregation at Clover Garden A.M.E. Church. The qualitative data coming from the Cultural Focus Groups, the workshops and sermons were presented, observed and evaluated.

## **Stage III: Conduct Research**

This stage involves the researcher administering the treatments (Cultural Focus Groups, Workshops and Sermons). The qualitative data in this study was gathered during the initial assessment focus groups and treatments. The Assessment Focus groups were

discussed previously. The venue for the focus groups sessions was the fellowship hall of Clover Garden AME Church. The sessions were conducted on two consecutive Wednesday nights each period consisting of two hours. The session was preceded by a fifteen-minute devotion period. Afterwards, a brief discussion was led by the Class Leaders explaining the purpose of the project. Notes provided by the class leaders and recorded during the proceedings were compiled to establish a record of the sessions.

The older generation prepared dishes that included age-old entrees and desserts like hopping john, pork salad, ash cakes and corn pudding. The majority of the Boomers and Gen Xers provided their favorite vegetables prepared by local restaurants and cafeterias such as K & W and Kentucky Fried Chicken. A discussion then ensued using the various responses to the prevailing eight questions previously listed as the central topics. With regard to the questions that pertained to change for the growth of the church, the younger generation contended that if they were given an opportunity to have equal access at the planning table, their creative ideas could be instrumental in implementing change while the wisdom of the seniors would be needed to keep the church in balance. Question number five (What is your prevailing attitude toward the church with regard to inclusiveness?) created the liveliest discussion. The younger generation felt as if they were the isolated group, but interestingly enough, the older generation were also of the opinion that they were the group who is considered unimportant and therefore overlooked in the church's critical decision making process.

## Project Workshops

Three workshops were conducted with twenty-four of the thirty-nine survey participants, ranging in age from 10 to 80. These workshops were hosted at the site of the local context, Clover Garden AME Church in Burlington, NC on three consecutive Saturdays: July 8, 2006, July 15, 2006 and July 22, 2006. The workshops were scheduled for 9:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. and featured a fifteen-minute break. The project workshops were designed and tailored to the Clover Garden congregation with the anticipated result of increasing their understanding of the duties and responsibilities of leaders, as well as members and their ability to work together to bridge the generation gap. The researcher chose to use workshops for the interaction and dialogue produced between participants and facilitator, which is a direct result of the unbiased nature of the facilitators.

Mr. Nigel Alston, a motivational speaker, trainer, talk show host and columnist, whose goal was to encourage the group members to succeed and inspire them to act, facilitated the topic of the first workshop, Building Church Leaders and Followers. Mr. Alston is a Christian first who is diligently involved in his community and local church on all levels. The researcher selected Mr. Alston because he possesses a passion for cultivating leaders and spearheading leadership opportunities. He also has a natural affinity for encouraging people of God to become involved and remain committed to Christ through active participation in their local congregation.

The topic, Building Church Leaders and Followers, was a 4-part workshop series that focused on the characteristics and duties of members and the local officers of each auxiliary in the church. It was designed to encourage, excite and enlighten the



participants to set goals for the ministry as leaders and to extend the use of their leadership skills in the church and the community. Additionally, the workshop stressed helping others to validate the church and their own individual gifts because doing so provides an opportunity to bridging the generation gap and empowering the congregation. The group chose a secretary to provide a record of the meeting. Upon the completion of transcribing the notes from the proceedings, the compilation was duplicated and distributed to each member of the group. Evaluation forms were distributed at the conclusion of each session, which were completed and returned prior to dismissal.

The second workshop was held at the same venue on July 15, 2006. It was well attended by the same twenty-four participants from the first workshop. The topic of the second workshop was, Where Do I Fit In? Rev. Anita Thompson, school counselor and pastor of Persimmon Grove AME Church, facilitated it. The topics of discussion for this workshop focused on the new member's curriculum of the AME Church. The curriculum was designed to provide an opportunity for the new member and pastor to get acquainted. Also, it was to serve as the instrument to lay the foundation of the A.M.E. church and its respective relationship to the local church. Subject material covered in this workshop included the articles of religion, spiritual foundations of prayer and Bible study, and the Christian responsibilities of tithing, time and talent. Overall, the workshop's primary focus was the responsibility of the congregants to God, to one another, and the need for the church to be involved in evangelism by promoting church growth along with the fulfillment of the great commission.

The third workshop was held at the same venue and was entitled, The Intergenerational Church Experience Workshop. The same twenty-four participants of the

previous workshops once again attended it. In addition there were ten new attendees. The new group members had heard about the previous workshops and wanted to experience the same excitement exhibited by the original group members. The facilitator for this workshop was Rev. Dr. Patrice Fields, an associate minister of Emmanuel AME Church in Durham, North Carolina and an adjunct professor at Shaw Divinity School. Dr. Fields is a gifted preacher, teacher, vocalist and workshop leader. This workshop was geared toward intergeneration partnerships where the young and the old of the church community are adopted in order to maintain a meaningful, productive relationship by helping the younger generation to understand the older generation. It brought people of all ages together providing a vital link to the past. The elders shared their stories, providing an eyewitness account of historic events and a snapshot of what life was like when they were young. This workshop was educational for the young as well as the old and resulted in the development of new relationships. The workshop also helped those representatives of the various generations present to see and understand their individual gifts and how the use of those gifts could serve to help the church grow and at the same time, empower everyone. In the three workshops the notes taken indicate that the sessions were very stimulating and informative. Outlines of all workshops can be found in Appendix E.

A premise that was revealed during this process and throughout this experience was the lack of knowledge concerning church traditions in order to function in an orderly fashion. It was revealed that the lack of a strong teaching component (i.e. Christian Education) regarding what God intends the church to be has caused disengagement among the generations. It is the belief of the researcher that a strong Christian Education

component coupled with a leadership that is representative of all generations is very important to ease the rising tension between the generations provides a positive and fruitful future for the church. Consequently the researcher chose as a part of the teaching component to include a rediscovery of the use of the Discipline and Doctrine of the church emphasizing and reacquainting the congregants to the use of the discipline.

The first sermon was delivered on Sunday, July 16, 2006, during the 11:00 A.M. regular morning worship service entitled, *Get in Step to Move to Another Level*, and was taken from Ezra 3:10-13. The attendance on this Sunday morning was seventy-eight congregants, as is the usual number in attendance. The second sermon was preached on Sunday, July 23, 2006, at 11:00 A.M. the regular morning worship service entitled, *Blessed Are The Flexible*, taken from Mark 2:13-3:6. The attendance this Sunday morning included 6 additional members. Attendance is higher on fourth Sundays because the Gospel Choir, the congregants' favorite choir, sings. This sermon garnered the most discussion.

The researcher chose to use sermons because of their unique ability to touch the hearts and minds of black worshippers. Henry H. Mitchell suggests that the style of black preaching includes the call and response dialogical pattern, which requires a participatory audience. This author further contends that this dialogue between preacher and congregation often starts with familiar biblical and living materials to stretch the thinking and increase the insight of the hearers. This pattern has a way of taking the congregation from the known to the unknown. This association with previous experiences helps to open the door to new understandings. Mitchell suggests that genuine Black preaching focuses on problems that confront people daily that are considered real needs.

Although some contend that the celebration may take the edge off social activism, this author believes that the dialogue gives greater ownership of identification with the gospel.<sup>2</sup> The sermons are found in Appendix F.

### **Stage IV: Analysis of Data**

#### **Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis**

This stage involves the researcher analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data.

Pre and post test survey questions were developed as a result of the strategies in Stage I of the study. The focus group questions and the pre and post test questions were structured around the Action Research Theory. The pre and post test survey questions were the same. Both surveys can be found in Table IV in Appendix A. The pretest and post test were administered after a typical Sunday service, both in the church sanctuary. Also, the same proctor conducted both surveys. The test were collected and given to a statistical analyst.

#### **Measurements: T-Test and Paired T-Test**

The data analysis section of the method section includes the selection of the appropriate statistics to examine the research questions. T-Test and Paired-T test were selected because of the small and non-random sample and the desire to gather descriptive statistics. The pretest and posttest were analyzed using T-Test.

The T-Test is appropriate when there are single interval dependent and dichotomous independent variables, and there is a desire to test the difference of means

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<sup>2</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery Of A Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 100-108.

(for example, test mean differences between samples of men and women). The T-Test may be used to compare the means of a criterion variable for two independent samples or for two dependent samples (ex., before-after studies, matched-pairs studies, etc). This researcher used a T-Test to analyze the pre and post test data to determine how congregants responded to the questions. Analysis of the pretest showed that there were significant differences at the .07 level for the questions in Appendix A.

When looking at the frequencies of the pretest at the .07 level, we find that the majority of the people have been in the church for at least 20 years and they have been in the church over 30 years. A significant number have been in the church since 1994 (30 out of 39) ten years prior to the researcher becoming pastor and 27 of the 39 pretest participants did not attend the New Members Class. Most participants have the following: 1) leadership positions in the church, 2) seen increase in membership, 3) like the organization of the church, 4) have seen changes in the worship service, 5) consider the service spiritually alive, 6) participate in church business, 7) God is worshiped in their way, 8) attend worship services on Sunday, 9) attend special programs, 10) feel that they are empowered by the minister, 11) tithe, 12) feel that changes are needed in the church, 13) did not feel that they contributed to the mission statement of the church, and 14) have invited others to attend church. The non-significant frequencies show that pretest participants do not: 1) attend Board meetings, 2) participate in church business, 3) attend evening worship services, 5) attend other worship services, 6) Bible study, 7) know the mission and goals of the church, 8) have not seen a plan for growth and development for the church, and 9) are not contacted when they do not attend church.

The post-test data showed that the following questions were significant at the .07 level (Table 3).

- Question #9: Do you feel that you contribute to the functions of the church? (yes)
- Question #12: Is the ministry and worship service alive spiritually? (yes )
- Question #13: Do you feel that the context of worshipping God in your way is provided? (yes)
- Question #6 : Membership increases in this administration (yes)

Qualitative data is taken from the responses to the evaluations and the observations found in the researcher's notes. (Appendix C).

### Paired T-Test

The paired T-Test compares two paired groups so you can make inferences about the size of the average treatment effect (average difference between the paired measurements). The most important results are the P value and the confidence interval. The P value answers this question: If the treatment really had no effect, what is the chance that random sampling would result in an average effect as far from zero (or more so) as observed in this experiment?

Statistically significant is not the same as scientifically important. Before interpreting the P value or confidence interval, the researcher considered the sample and size of the treatment effect anticipated and determined that a P value of 0.1 was appropriate.

Hence, it is unlikely that the treatment effect observed is due to a coincidence of random sampling (note: there was no random sampling in this study). The researcher rejects the idea that the treatment did nothing, and concludes instead that the treatment had an effect. In this study only Question 4 had a significant P value and Pearson

Correlation of 0.996473. Pearson's  $r$  is the usual measure of correlation, sometimes called product-moment correlation. Pearson's  $r$  is a measure of association, which varies from -1 to +1, with 0 indicating no relationship (random pairing of values) and 1 indicating perfect relationship. All other Pearson Correlations were one and not significant at the 0.1 level. Therefore, the question concerning congregant's membership on the Choir, Steward Boards, Trustee Boards, Stewardess and others increased after the treatments (Table 3).

### **Stage V. Recommendations and Changes**

The study has resulted in the Model of Transformational Change. This model is based on the results of this study design and the understandings and recommendations of this researcher. The model can be found in Appendix A.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

This action research process has helped the researcher to slowly introduce a transformational model of change by gradually adding younger congregants to the leading boards as junior members in an effort to bridge the generation gaps. This process allows for the older members to function in a nurturing position as mentors and simultaneously allows the younger congregants to serve in leadership roles as they offer vital input. The result has been overwhelmingly positive. The researcher's thinking has changed as it relates to areas of understanding: a) the involvement of all segments of the congregation in the planning of the work as being critical b) the responsibility of creating the atmosphere, opportunities, and training to help younger congregants prepare to share in leadership.

Today the needs of African Americans have changed, and the characteristics of the younger generation and newcomers are indicative of these changes. Some of the changes include homelessness, limited exposure to computer technology, and decreased parental involvement with the school system. This project was designed to help Clover Garden and any African American rural church maintain its place of prominence in the life of the African American community.

After surveying the congregation, many issues were found to exist between the new and old members. The study revealed that those who were members of the church from 1994 until present were satisfied with the church as it is, while some of those who



became members after 1994 were not as satisfied. Stated problems included the number and types of activities held at the church, as well as activities that promoted unity. Less than half of both the members before and after 1994 felt they had been accepted into the church family. However, more of the members who had been a part of the church after 1994 indicated that the church had met their needs than those who were members before 1994.

From this information the implementation of a plan was found to be necessary to engage the integration of all generations in a strategic plan that would create an environment of inclusiveness. The environment would attempt to develop an atmosphere that puts God first in all our endeavors, and thus fulfill all the needs of the church. In doing so the researcher found the need to develop focus groups, workshops and sermons to engage in conversation with the old and new members of all generations. The task of mobilizing the congregation for ministry demanded that one first get their attention. In the scriptures Jesus gave both motivation and instruction to God's people through preaching and teaching. Two great scholars indicated that preaching should make clear goal statements in behavioral terms.<sup>1</sup>

To reach the members, two focus groups, three workshops and two sermons were developed in an attempt to motivate and mobilize the congregation for a more inclusive ministry. These focus groups, workshops and sermons served as methods of engaging all members, old and new to become accountable to God. It also showed how the church could be used as a vehicle to reach all who were in need if they all worked together. The first sermon focused on all generations working together. We could all rejoice together

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<sup>1</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), cover.

both the young and the old because God was moving among us for the same reason. The second sermon was designed to motivate the congregation's older constituents to remain focused on the current conditions so as not to become stagnant by the past. This was in an effort to be flexible in all areas of ministry.

The focus groups, workshops and sermons were then designed to make the church more user friendly. The first workshop was developed to make sure that all church leaders understood their duties and their relationship to the rest of the congregants. Further, to make sure they were willing to carry out their duties in the eyes of God for the good of the church and its members. The second workshop continued to emphasize that everyone had gifts to be used to build up the body of Christ and where those gifts fit. The third workshop related how to bring about an intergenerational church that would bridge the generation gap by resulting in empowering the congregation.

The use of focus groups, workshops and sermons created an atmosphere of friendliness and openness necessary to determine the needs of the members, and ways to provide for their needs. The workshop focused on the roles of the Church Leaders, and ways the members could reach these leaders who could provide resources relating to their needs. A closer view at the focus of this project reveals that alienation, and a lack of inclusiveness was the cause of the generation gap and thereby led to the congregation becoming immobilized. When leadership fails to properly respond to growth and inclusion of all generations in all areas of ministry, that ministry becomes immobilized. This immobilization will have a tendency to destroy the unity with the congregation.

The researcher has been changed without a doubt as a result of this project. The changes include a greater sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The researcher

has leaned on her own understanding in the past instead of trusting God for a new direction. The researcher has been exposed to the benefits of a more critical and personal analysis of how to do ministry. The changes also include a change in leadership style that will allow others to share and take ownership of the journey. The additional changes in this researcher include a more aggressive approach to involving the church in community and social ministries. The burden for members to get the burden for ministry has proven to be the backward approach in getting people involved. The researcher has learned to take the two or three who will go because they will spread a flame that will soon flow through the entire congregation.

The action research process has assisted the researcher to better understand what was happening to both the researcher and the congregation in wanting the members to help do the ministry as instructed. However, a vital part of involving members of all generations in the decision making process at the outset gave them more ownership in the work of the ministry. The researcher now understands the responsibility as pastor to create the atmosphere, opportunities, and training to help all laypersons to share a greater involvement in the work of the ministry for the church.

In conclusion, if the project were to be initiated with other congregations as the subject, the researcher would recommend the addition of at least two sermons and focus groups. Two sermons and two focus groups did not provide ample interaction to really produce the amount of change the researcher would like to have seen. However, there has been an increase in intergenerational involvement and attitudes among members that are significant as a result of the project.

The researcher has been inspired to begin plans to set up workshops for the district of her ministry. Many of the churches in this district, as well as others, are rural and have many of the same problems. The researcher is inspired to develop a program that will assist in lifting other churches in the district that desires to bridge the generation gap in order to empower congregations for meaningful ministry.

Focus groups, open forums, and mini workshops are the most productive methods that should be utilized to engage in conversation with the congregations. The process should also be offered to other churches to examine the viability of the model in their church as a method of creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness. One method would be to offer a workshop to other church leaders to expose them to the methods used to deal with inclusiveness in the church.

## **APPENDIX A**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Pre-Test Questions**

1. What are you as a member looking for from the Church? Expectations, etc.?
2. Do you think there needs to be change in the church?
3. Do you think change will assist in the growth of the church?
4. Will you be a part of bringing about positive change?
5. What is your prevailing attitude toward the church with regard to inclusiveness?
6. Do you feel that you contribute to the functions of the church?
7. Does the pastor's model of ministry empower you to become involved in the church?

Does the church have a plan for growth and development and have you seen that plan?

## CONGREGATIONAL SCALE SURVEY

Age:
Gender:
20A: Please Explain

For each item identified below, circle the answer  
to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality.

Description/Identification of Survey Item	Scale				
1. How many years have you been a member of Clover Garden AME Church?	10 or Less	20	30	40	more
	6	9	4	9	11
2. Did you join Clover Garden AME Church since 1994?	Y 8	N 31			
3. Did you attend New Members Class?	Y 12	N 27			
4. Are you a member of:	Choir	Steward Board	Trustee	Stewardesses	Other
5. Do you serve in a leadership position in the church?	Y 30	N 9			
6. In your opinion has the membership increased since the present administration?	Y 28	N 11			
7. Do you like the organizational structure of the church?	Y 30	N 9			
8. Do you attend Board Meetings?	Y 24	N 15			
9. Do you feel that you contribute to the functions of the church?	Y 38	N 1			
10. Do you participate in church business?	Y 25	N 14			
11. Have you seen changes in the worship service?	Y 31	N 8			
12. Is the ministry and worship service alive spiritually?	Y 36	N 3			
13. Do you feel that the context of worshipping God in your way provided?	Y 35	N 4			
14. How often do you attend worship services on Sundays at this church?	12	2 1	3 7	4 29	a month

# CONGREGATIONAL SCALE SURVEY

Description/Identification of Survey Item	Scale				
15. How often do you attend worship services during the evening at this church?	113	2 12	3 12	4 2	a month
16. How often do you attend other worship services at this church?	112	2 13	3 10	4 4	a month
17. Do you attend Special Programs?	Y38	N 1			
18. Do you attend Bible Study and/or Sunday School?	Y19	N20			
19. Does the minister empower you to become involved in the church?	Y33	N16			
20. Do you Tithe? If, no please complete line # 20A.	Y 29	N 10			
21. Do you know the visions and goals of the church?	Y 21	N 18			
22. Do you know the mission statement of the church?	Y 17	N 22			
23. Did you contribute to the creation of the mission statement?	Y 15	N 24			
24. Do you feel that changes are needed to facilitate growth in the church?	Y 37	N 2			
25. Have you invited someone to attend church?	Y 35	N 4			
26. Does the church have a plan for growth and development and have you seen that Plan?	Y 13	N 26			
27. Are you contacted when you do not attend church?	Y 13	N 26			

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX B**

## **The Model of Transformational Change Study**

**Stage I:** *Assessment/Identification of the Problem:* Minister Description of Project (**what was said, who was there, did you use visuals**) , Minister Discussions with Boards and Organizations (**when, where, what, who**), Assessment Focus Groups (**when, where, what, who**).

**Stage II:** *Design A Methodology:* Triangulation Method, Qualitative (Assessment Focus Groups, Treatment Workshops (**when, where, what, who**), Evaluations and Observations (**when, where, what, who**)) and Quantitative (Pre and Post-Test) research (**when, where, what, who**).

**Stage III:** *Conduct Research:* Sample description and size, develop Pre and Post Test, administered treatments, administer post-test

**Stage IV:** *Analysis of Data:* Frequencies, T-Test and Paired T-Test.

**Stage V:** *Recommendations and Changes:* (**when, what, who**)bridge generational gap, empower congregant, transform organizational structure.

## **The Model of Transformational Change**

### **Stage I:** *Assessment/Identification of the Problem:*

Assessment Focus Groups, Minister Description of Project, Minister Discussions with Boards and Organizations about the Project.

### **Stage II:** *Set Goals and Select Context Associates:*

### **Stage III:** *Train Congregants:*

Determine Desired Behaviors from Assessment/Identification of Problem and use your treatments (focus groups, workshops, sermons)

### **Stage IV:** *Evaluate training:*

Focus Groups, Observations and/or Written Evaluations

### **Stage V:** *Recommendations and Changes:*

Did you reach your goals, i.e. solve the problem? If not, what part of the process should be changed?

## **APPENDIX C**

TABLE 1

**Generation Lifestyle Terms**

Strauss and Howe's book *Generations* maintains that society unfolds in a regular cyclical way and that the changes reoccur every four generations.

Advertisers and sociologists have given a whole range of meaningful terms or acronyms to groups of consumers according to their age group, their personality and often their sex or location. Looking at these generation terms does help to identify recognizable groups in society in the consumer driven world of marketing and demographic opinion. Trends that these groups follow often help us to distinguish differences between groupings.

Generation Table	
<b>Cyber Generation</b>	Born 2002 -2025
<b>Generation Y</b> also known as the <b>Millennial Generation</b> and the <b>i.generation</b>	Born 1982-2001 A <b>civic</b> generation, inner driven within the information revolution, striving to get ahead.
<b>Generation X</b> also known as the <b>13th Generation</b>	Born 1960-1981 A <b>reactive</b> generation, street wise. Examples - Madonna, Tom Cruise.
<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<p>Born 1943-1960 An <b>idealist</b> generation, often stressed out. Some sources suggest true baby boomers were born between 1946 to 1964 after World War II to experience the pop media revolution and the ideal of peace in our times.</p> <p>Typical boomers include Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Cher.</p>
<b>Silent Generation</b>	Born 1925-1942, 95% of this generation is retired. They are an <b>adaptive</b> generation because they have had to be. This generation includes beats and beatniks. This generation were technically born too late to be war heroes.
<b>G.I Generation</b>	Born 1901-1924 Concerned primarily with a <b>civic</b> outlook within society.
<b>Lost Generation</b>	Born 1883-1900 Many fought and died in World War 1.

## FREQUENCY DATA

TABLE 2

#14	0		Frequency	
		1		2
		2		1
		3		7
		4		29
	More	0		0

Sum is the number that responded to Yes

#15	0		Frequency	
		1		13
		2		12
		3		12
		4		4
	More	0		0

#16	0		Frequency	
		1		12
		2		13
		3		10
		4		4
	More	0		0

	0		Frequency	
		10		6
		20		9
		30		4
		40		9
	More	0		11

TABLE 2

Question 2		Question 3	
Mean	0.205128	Mean	0.307
			693
Standard	0.065504	Standard	0.074
Error		Error	871
Median	0	Median	0
Mode	0	Mode	0
Standard	0.409074	Standard	0.467
Deviation		Deviation	572
Sample		Sample	0.218
Variance	0.167341	Variance	623
Kurtosis	0.323017	Kurtosis	1.318
			65
Skewness	1.519583	Skewness	0.867
			044
Range	1	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	1	Maximum	1
Sum	8	Sum	12
Count	39	Count	39

Question 5		Question 6	
Mean	0.769	Mean	0.717
	231		949
Standard	0.068	Standard	0.072
Error	348	Error	999
Median	1	Median	1
Mode	1	Mode	1
Standard	0.426	Standard	0.455
Deviation	833	Deviation	881
Sample	0.182	Sample	0.207
Variance	186	Variance	827
Kurtosis	0.247	Kurtosis	1.040
	25		37
Skewness	1.329	Skewness	1.007
	72		85
Range	1	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	1	Maximum	1
Sum	30	Sum	28
Count	39	Count	39

TABLE 2

Question 8		Question 9	
Mean	0.615385	Mean	0.974
			359
Standard	0.078921	Standard	0.025
Error		Error	641
Median	1	Median	1
Mode	1	Mode	1
Standard	0.492864	Standard	0.160
Deviation		Deviation	128
Sample	0.242915	Sample	0.025
Variance		Variance	641
Kurtosis	-.85435	Kurtosis	39
Skewness	0.49353	Skewness	-6.245
Range	1	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	1	Maximum	1
Sum	24	Sum	38
Count	39	Count	39

Question 10		Question 11	
Mean	0.641	Mean	0.794
	026		872
Standard	0.077	Standard	0.065
Error	818	Error	504
Median	1	Median	1
Mode	1	Mode	1
Standard	0.485	Standard	0.409
Deviation	971	Deviation	074
Sample	0.236	Sample	0.167
Variance	167	Variance	341
Kurtosis	1.716	Kurtosis	0.323
	6		017
Skewness	0.611	Skewness	1.519
	76		
Range	1	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	1	Maximum	1
Sum	25	Sum	31
Count	39	Count	39



**Question 13**

Mean	0.897436
Standard Error	0.049216
Median	1
Mode	1
Standard Deviation	0.307355
Sample Variance	0.094467
Kurtosis	5.722008
Skewness	-2.72596
Range	1
Minimum	0
Maximum	1
Sum	35
Count	39

**Question 14**

Mean	3.615385
Standard Error	0.125201
Median	4
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.78188
Sample Variance	0.611336
Kurtosis	5.161418
Skewness	-2.31986
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	141
Count	39

**Question 15**

Mean	2.076923
Standard Error	0.148699
Median	2
Mode	1
Standard Deviation	0.928627
Sample Variance	0.862348
Kurtosis	-1.03279
Skewness	0.25702
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	81
Count	39

**Question 16**

Mean	2.153846
Standard Error	0.158171
Median	2
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	0.98778
Sample Variance	0.975709
Kurtosis	-0.89318
Skewness	-0.366824
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	84
Count	39

**Question 18**

Mean	0.487179	Mean	0.846154
Standard	0.081084	Standard	0.05853
Error		Error	
Median	0	Median	1
Mode	0	Mode	1
Standard	0.50637	Standard	0.365518
Deviation		Deviation	
Sample	0.25641	Sample	0.133603
Variance		Variance	
Kurtosis	-2.10811	Kurtosis	2.090363
Skewness	0.053374	Skewness	-1.99643
Range	1	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	1	Maximum	1
Sum	19	Sum	33
Count	39	Count	39

**Question 19****Question 20**

Mean	0.74359	Mean	0.538462
Standard	0.070834	Standard	0.08087
Error		Error	
Median	1	Median	1
Mode	1	Mode	1
Standard	0.442359	Standard	0.50535
Deviation		Deviation	
Sample	0.195682	Sample	0.255061
Variance		Variance	
Kurtosis	-0.69059	Kurtosis	-2.08394
Skewness	-1.16085	Skewness	-0.16055
Range	1	Range	1
Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum	1	Maximum	1
Sum	29	Sum	21
Count	39	Count	39

**Question 21**

**Table 3**  
**Congregational Survey Results**

	Age	Gender	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9	Question 10	Question 11
Member 1	46	M	20	2	2	Other	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Member 2	66	F	More	2	1	Trustee	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Member 3	62	F	40	2	2	Trustee/Stewardess	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 4	81	F	More	2	1	Trustee/Stewardess	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 5	71	F	More	2	2	Trustee	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Member 6	71	F	40	2	2	Other	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 7	62	F	30	2	1	Stewardesses	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Member 8	13	F	Less	2	1	Choir	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Member 9	14	F	Less	1	2	Choir	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Member 10	45	F	20	1	2	Stewardesses	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Member 11	53	F	20	1	2	Steward Board	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 12	46	F	20	1	2	Other	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Member 13	59	F	40	2	2	Other	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Member 14	57	F	40	2	2	Stewardesses	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
Member 15	35	F	20	2	2	Other	1	1	1	2	1	2	1

Ag e	Gen der	Question 1	Ques tion 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Questi on 6	Questi on 7	Questi on 8	Questi on 9	Questi on 10	Questi on 11
Member 16	F	Less	1	1	Choir/Other	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Member 17	F	20	2	2	Choir	1	2	2	2	1	2	1
Member 18	F	More	2	2	Choir/Steward Board	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 19	M	20	2	1	Other	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 20	F	40	2	1	Other	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Member 21	F	Less	2	2	Other	2	2	1	2	1	2	2
Member 22	M	40	2	2	Trustee	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Member 23	F	Less	2	2	Choir/Other	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
Member 24	F	More	2	2	Trustee	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Member 25	F	30	2	2	Steward Board/Choir	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 26	F	20	2	2	Steward Board/Choir	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 27	M	More	1	1	Trustee/Choir	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 28	M	20	2	2	Trustee/Choir	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Age	Gender	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9	Question 10	Question 11
Member 29	46 F	More	2	2	Choir/Other	1	2	2	2	1	1	2
Member 30	51 M	30	2	2	Steward Board/Choir	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 31	54 F	Less	1	1	Choir/Other	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 32	58 F	More	1	1	Choir	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 33	49 M	More	2	2	Trustee/Choir	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 34	59 M	More	2	2	Trustee/Choir	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Member 35	51 M	30	2	1	Trustee/Choir	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Member 36	68 M	40	2	1	Steward/Choir	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 37	72 M	40	2	2	Steward/Stewardess	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 38	73 M	More	2	2	Trustee/Choir	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Member 39	63 F	40	2	2	Choir	2	1	2	2	1	2	2

			Questi on 12	Questi on 13	Questi on 14	Questi on 15	Questi on 16	Question 17	Question 18	Questi on 19	Questi on 20	Questi on 21
Member 1	46	M	1	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 2	66	F	1	1	4	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
Member 3	62	F	1	2	4	2	3	1	1	2	1	1
Member 4	81	F	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
Member 5	71	F	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 6	71	F	1	1	4	3	4	1	1	1	1	1
Member 7	62	F	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 8	13	F	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	1	2	2
Member 9	14	F	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	1	2	2
Member 10	45	F	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Member 11	53	F	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Member 12	46	F	1	1	4	1	1	2	2	1	2	1
Member 13	59	F	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Member 14	57	F	1	2	4	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Member 15	35	F	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	1	1	2

			Questi on 12	Questi on 13	Questi on 14	Questi on 15	Questi on 16	Question 17	Question 18	Questi on 19	Questi on 20	Questi on 21
Member 16	10	F	1	1	3	3	4	1	2	1	1	1
Member 17	40	F	1	1	4	1	2	1	2	2	1	2
Member 18	64	F	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Member 19	76	M	1	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 20	45	F	1	1	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	2
Member 21	42	F	1	1	4	3	4	1	1	1	1	2
Member 22	50	M	2	1	4	4	3	1	1	1	1	1
Member 23	16	F	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Member 24	84	F	1	1	4	3	3	1	2	2	1	2
Member 25	40	F	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Member 26	43	F	1	1	4	3	3	1	2	1	1	1
Member 27	67	M	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	1
Member 28	44	M	1	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	1	2

			Questi on 12	Questi on 13	Questi on 14	Questi on 15	Questi on 16	Question 17	Question 18	Questi on 19	Questi on 20	Questi on 21
Member 29	4	F	2	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
Member 30	5	M	1	1	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
Member 31	5	F	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	1	1	1
Member 32	5	F	1	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Member 33	4	M	1	1	4	3	3	1	2	1	1	1
Member 34	5	M	1	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Member 35	5	M	1	1	4	3	3	1	2	1	2	1
Member 36	6	M	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Member 37	7	M	1	1	4	3	2	1	2	2	1	2
Member 38	7	M	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
Member 39	6	F	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	2



Member	Question 22	Question 23	Question 24	Question 25	Question 26	Question 27
Member 1	46	M	1	1	2	1
Member 2	66	F	1	1	2	1
Member 3	62	F	1	1	1	2
Member 4	81	F	2	1	2	2
Member 5	71	F	1	1	1	2
Member 6	71	F	2	1	2	1
Member 7	62	F	1	1	2	1
Member 8	13	F	2	1	2	2
Member 9	14	F	2	1	2	2
Member 10	45	F	2	1	1	1
Member 11	53	F	1	2	1	2
Member 12	46	F	1	1	2	2
Member 13	59	F	2	1	2	1
Member 14	57	F	2	1	2	2
Member 15	35	F	2	1	2	2
Member 16	10	F	1	2	1	2
Member 17	40	F	2	1	2	2
Member 18	64	F	1	1	1	1

Member	76	Question 22	Question 23	Question 24	Question 25	Question 26	Question 27
Member 19	M	1	1	1	1	2	1
Member 20	F	1	2	1	1	1	2
Member 21	F	2	2	1	1	2	2
Member 22	M	1	2	1	1	1	2
Member 23	F	2	2	1	1	2	2
Member 24	F	2	2	1	1	2	2
Member 25	F	2	1	1	1	2	1
Member 26	F	2	2	1	1	1	1
Member 27	M	1	1	1	1	1	2
Member 28	M	2	2	1	1	2	2
Member 29	F	2	2	1	1	2	2
Member 30	M	2	2	1	1	2	2
Member 31	F	1	2	1	1	2	1
Member 32	F	1	1	1	2	2	2

Member 33	49	M	Question 22	Question 23	Question 24	Question 25	Question 26	Question 27
Member 34	59	M	2	2	1	1	2	1
Member 35	51	M	1	2	1	1	1	1
Member 36	68	M	2	1	1	1	2	2
Member 37	72	M	2	1	1	1	2	2
Member 38	73	M	2	2	2	2	2	2
Member 39	63	F	2	2	1	1	1	2

**TABLE 4****Comparison of Action Research Characteristics**

(McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996) to Peterson Study (2007)

Characteristics	
McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead	Peterson
It leads to knowledge	Recommendations
It provides evidence to support this knowledge	Survey and focus group findings
It makes explicit the process of inquiry through which knowledge emerges	Action Research
It links new knowledge with existing knowledge	Study results and researchers knowledge and pretest
It requires action as an integral part of the research process	Treatments (sermons, workshops/focus groups, Jr. Boards)
It is the focus of the researcher's professional values rather methodological considerations	Philosophy of a progressive minister
It is necessarily insider research. In the sense of practitioners' researching their own professional action s.	Sermons and enhancing the models of information discrimination

TABLE 5

**Demographics****Intervention (Description of Ministry Project)****Demographic Information of 39 Participants**

Age Range *	Age	Male	Female	Years at Clover Garden		Member Since 1994	New Members Class
Total Participants	39	12	27	39	Number	39	39
Minimum	10			Less Than 10 Years	6	Yes= 8	Yes = 12
Median	53			More Than 20 Years	22	No = 31	No = 27
Maximum	84			More Than 40 Years	11		

\*Age of each participant can be found in Table 2: Frequency Analysis

II. *Project Population*: Members of the Clover Garden AME Church in Burlington, NC.

III. *Project Participants*: 39 Self-Selected Congregants

IV. *Project Implementation*: 4 Weeks in spring 2006

V. *Project Stages*:

**Stage I:** *Assessment/Identification of the Problem:*

Researcher's Description of Project, Researcher's Discussions with Boards and Organizations, Assessment Focus Groups.

**Stage II:** *Design A Methodology:* Triangulation Method, Qualitative (Assessment Focus Groups, Treatment Workshop Evaluations, Observations) and Quantitative (Pre and Post-Test) research.

**Stage III:** *Conduct Research:* Sample description and size, develop Pre and Post Test, administered treatments, administer post-test

**Stage IV:** *Analysis of Data:* Frequencies, T-Test and Paired T-Test.

**Stage V:** *Recommendations and Changes:* bridge generational gap,

## **APPENDIX D**

**Clover Garden African Methodist Episcopal Church  
4731 Burch Bridge Road  
Burlington, North Carolina, 27217  
Reverend Mary F. Peterson, Pastor**

**July 9 & 16, 2006**

**7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.**

### **Cultural Focus Group Sessions**

**Moderators: Louise Butler and Lora Harvey**

.....

#### **Devotions**

Opening Prayer.....volunteer

Scripture.....volunteer

Psalm 133 KJV

#### **Open Discussion**

- A. How to reach common ground
  - 1. Equal access at the planning table
  - 2. Use of the younger generations' creativity and senior's wisdom.

#### **Grace and Fellowship Meal**

- B. Where do we go from here?
  - 1. Rediscovery of the use of the Discipline and New Members Class to all congregants, especially officers.
  - 2. Use of mentoring model of leadership to be major component.
  - 3. Development of plan for growth to empower congregation.

#### **Closing Remarks and Mizpah**



## **APPENDIX E**

**Clover Garden African Methodist Episcopal Church  
4731 Burch Bridge Road  
Burlington, North Carolina  
Reverend Mary F. Peterson, Pastor**

**July 8, 2006  
9:00 AM – 12:30 PM**

***“ A Transformational Model of Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and  
Empowering Congregations in a Rural A.M.E. Church Setting” Workshop***

**Building Church Leaders and Followers**

.....

Moments of Praise and Worship Medley

Opening Prayer ..... Reverend James Moore

Scripture Reading ..... Sis. Cassandra Lea, Steward  
*Romans 12:3-12*

Presentation of Speaker ..... Rev. Mary F. Peterson

Presentation ..... Bro. Nigel Alston, Steward, etc.  
St. James A.M.E. Church  
Winston-Salem, NC

Question and Answer Period

Benediction ..... Rev. Mary F. Peterson

## **Building Church Leaders and Followers:**

### **Introduction**

This is a 4-part workshop series designed to encourage, excite and enlighten members of the A.M.E. Church. It will not only help members improve their skills but also address various areas, duties and responsibilities of the A.M.E. Church member. The focus of these sessions is aimed at the local officers and members of each organization in the Church

### **I. Who Are We?**

#### **A. Why A.M.E.**

1. What are your goals?
2. Where do you fit in as a member?
3. How do you benefit as a member?

#### **B. The Potential Around You**

1. Adding value to those you serve
2. Why join a church?

### **II. Leadership Skills in the Church and Community**

#### **A. Healing a Painful Past**

#### **B. Services, Programs and Protocol**

### **III. Helping Others, Validating the Church and Your Gifts**

#### **A. Missionaries in God's Sight**

#### **B. Discovering Your Encouragement Style**

#### **C. Six Ways to Care**

#### **D. When Members Cry for Help**

### **IV. Stewards and Trustees of the Church**

Clover Garden African Methodist Episcopal Church  
 4731 Burch Bridge Road  
 Burlington, North Carolina  
 Reverend Mary F. Peterson, Pastor

July 15, 2006  
 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM

***“ A Transformational Model of Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and  
 Empowering Congregations in a Rural A.M.E. Church Setting” Workshop***

**Where Do I Fit In?**

.....

Moments of Praise and Worship Medley

Opening Prayer ..... Brother Seawell Wilson

Scripture Reading ..... Sister Toni Shaw, Steward  
*Romans 12:3-12*

Presentation of Speaker ..... Rev. Mary F. Peterson

Presentation ..... Rev. Anita Thompson, Pastor  
 Persimmon Grove A.M.E. Church  
 Greensboro, NC

Question and Answer Period

Benediction ..... Rev. Mary F. Peterson

## **Where Do I Fit In?**

### **Introduction**

The New Members curriculum is mandatory for each new member to the A.M.E. Church. It is designed to first and foremost to provide an opportunity for the new member to and pastor to get to know each other. Additionally it serves as the instrument to lay the foundation of the organization of the A.M.E. and the respective relationship to the local church.

- I. Introduction/Review of Text Books and Materials
  - A. The Holy Bible
  - B. The A.M.E. Network
  - C. The A.M.E. Network Manual
  - D. The A.M.E. Catechist
  - E. The A.M.E. Stewardship and Tithing Manual
  - F. Related Periodicals, Pamphlets, and Brochures
- II. The Articles of Religion
- III. The History of the A.M.E. Church
- IV. The Government of the A.M.E. Church
- V. The Local Church
  - A. Local Church History
  - B. Local Church Ministries
- VI. Spiritual Foundations
  - A. Prayer
  - B. Bible Study
- VII. Christian Responsibilities
  - A. Time
  - B. Talent
- VIII. Tithing
  - A. Responsibility to God
  - B. Responsibility to Church
  - C. Responsibility to Family
- IX. The Great Commission

Clover Garden African Methodist Episcopal Church  
 4731 Burch Bridge Road  
 Burlington, North Carolina  
 Reverend Mary F. Peterson, Pastor

July 22, 2006  
 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM

***“A Transformational Model of Introducing Change by Bridging the Generations and Empowering Congregations in a Rural A.M.E. Church Setting” Workshop***

**The Intergenerational Church Experience**

.....

Moments of Praise and Worship Medley

Opening Prayer ..... Sister Betty Lea, Steward

Scripture Reading ..... Sister Yvonne Anderson, Trustee  
*Romans 12:3-12*

Presentation of Speaker ..... Rev. Mary F. Peterson

Presentation ..... Rev. Dr. Patrice Fields, Associate Minister  
 Emmanuel A.M.E. Church  
 Durham, NC

Question and Answer Period

Benediction ..... Rev. Mary F. Peterson

### **The Intergenerational Church Experience Workshop**

Core Themes: Intergenerational Interdependence, Productive Training, Lifelong Learning, and Civic Involvement for the African American Church

#### **Building communities that rebuild lives.**

#### **What is an Intergenerational Initiative?**

Intergenerational Initiatives change the lives of school age children, foster children, retirees, and families by enabling them to create their own neighborhood and forge their own network of caring relationships. With these initiatives, the young and old within the church community are adopted in order to maintain a meaningful, productive relationship by help in younger generations understand the older generation. At the heart of this neighborhood is a sense of shared purpose and values. This serves as a foundation for caring relationships among all member of the church and its community.

More and more, schools are increasingly searching for ways to offer their students the benefit of elders' experience, using this concept within the church community can be just as beneficial. **Intergenerational Initiatives** bring people of all ages together with seniors who provide a vital link to the past. By sharing their stories, elders provide an eyewitness account of historic events and a snapshot of what life was like when they were young. The initiative allows all generations to feel more comfortable with one another and instills the value of volunteerism among young people.

#### **What will participants in this initiative accomplish?**

- To help train and empower the church and the lay person;
- To bring a wisdom, experience and an external perspective to the church lay people;
- To be a cheerleader for the church lay people;
- To help the church lay see their blind spots;
- To help the church lay balance the stress of begin active in the church and with Demands of a healthy family life;
- To provide a safe place for the church lay people that have doubts and ask questions to them resolved.

#### **What type of areas do intergenerational initiatives cover?**

Educating the Young and Old

Community Planning & Vision

Kinship Care when oppositional arises (*Mentoring with those members when crisis hits Home as well as in the church – supporting people through good and bad times*)

Develop Relationships

Identify Core Group Prospects

### **Steps to Closing the Churches Intergenerational Gap**

- Step 1: Prayer
- Step 2: Understanding the needs of others
- Step 3: Identifying the Challenges
- Step 4: Partnership of Members/Organization
- Step 5: Commitment
- Step 6: Select Leadership Team
- Step 7: Train Leadership Team
- Step 8: Build Core Group (*Members/Organizations*)

### **Areas of Inclusion**

- ✓ Small Group Leaders
- ✓ Discipleship and Evangelism
- ✓ Worship Leader
- ✓ Bible Teachers
- ✓ Children & Youth Leaders
- ✓ Missionary Leaders
- ✓ Usher Board Leaders
- ✓ Administrative Personnel
- ✓ Boomers & Young Adults
- ✓ Disenfranchised Members
  - Members who have moved from the church due to business
  - Members who have moved due to family issues
- ✓ Those failed by traditional means
  - Members who are “new” in Christ
  - Those who do not feel like they fit in (*Examples: Shy, not personable, family convictions, etc.*)



### **I. Introduction: The Potential Around You**

Adding value to those you serve (2 Timothy 2:20-21 / Romans 12:8)

#### **1. Why join a church? *A defense of an old-fashioned idea***

- A. Why A.M.E.?
- B. What are our goals as A.M.E.?
- C. Where do I fit in as a member?
- D. How do I benefit as a member?

*“When you understand that leadership is influence instead of position, that changes everything.”*

### **II. Healing from a painful past**

***How can a congregation move beyond the times of difficulty?***

- A. Philippians 4:2; Romans 15:1-7
- B. What things can a church's leaders do now to help a church heal from the past?
- C. What has caused pain in the church?
- D. What have we done, if anything to bring healing?
- E. What could we do?

**Exercise:** Select a partner and tell your partner three things about your church and church involvement that has caused hurt to you. With your partner, discuss the ways you have overcome this issue. Explain clearly if the hurt caused is still lingering, and tell what would help the hurt go away.

### **III. Helping others, validating the church and your gifts**

Retaining your members by using your gifts, watch your church grow ...

- A. Show your church members what you have to offer by having a Skill Development Party

*(Making the Skill Development Party an effective tool to help members become more confident with the talents that they have as enhance those that are undeveloped)*

- a. Each partnership will write down all of the talents of which they say they possess. Each person in that partnership will find new ways to use these talents within the walls of the church.

### **IV. Partnership Development**

In order to make the church intergenerational program be successful, we must work with people that remove us from our comfort zone.

- 1. Partner members with people that work in areas or positions that they have not yet experienced or participated in.
  - A. Partners list areas of the church that they work in and talk about the challenges that they are faced with. Each group member will ask the following questions of their partner:
    - a. Explain what your position entails?
    - b. What is the hardest thing about your job?
    - c. What can you do to make your job more effective?
    - d. What can our church members do to help you with your job?
  - B. Game: What Do I Like  
The purpose of this game is to see how different or alike the partners are to one another. Once each partner has made a list, they will select what they have that is

alike. Those items that are not alike, will require the partners to choose one item from each others list and do at least one of these items together. This will introduce each partner in each others, “world”. (*Photography, Beading, Games*)

### C. Personality Game

## **V. Introduction: Leadership Skills in the Church and in the Community**

How you can help your church and community grow with effective programs

- A. Each partnership will pick an annual program to plan and possibly execute depending on the time limitations. The purpose of this exercise will be to have hands on teaching in open environment in order to created an open line of communication. (*This exercise will also help with advance planning of programs that are critical to the financial status of the church*)
- B. Each partnership will plan a community project for one of the organizations within the church will help sponsor and support. (*This section can consist of doing for schools, elderly, homeless, etc.*)
- C. Each partnership will be responsible for meeting with a designated person that is comfortable and familiar with the protocol of the A.M.E. Church. (*The final confirmation of the program will be approved by the Pastor*)

### **Services, Programs, and Protocol**

1. So you want to have a program
2. Organizing your program
3. Marketing your program
4. Follow through and Follow up

### **Developing CARE Groups**

CARE Groups will be a continuous effort by partners to stay in touch with paired elderly members of the church. Offering support to the elders’ families.

- A. Partners can provide transportation
- B. Help financially when needed
- C. Visit

### **Cross Training Church Style**

**Be Thankful and Be Blessed – Thankful Connections:**

- Listing the reasons you appreciate others can solidify your bond with them  
*Philippians 1:1-8*
- Every Sunday partners will either trade places with members who are on various organizations
- Sit in meetings/programs that they would not normally attend
- Ask questions
- Provide ideas
- Participate in action areas such as helping Stewards count money and follow outside of the Sunday services, which may include contacting of pastors for special occasions, booking room for conferences, special needs to the Pastor, etc.
- Partners can cross-train with Trustees, YPD Director functions, Ushers, Choirs, etc. (*Members of the Senior choir could attend the Youth choir practices, etc.*)

## **APPENDIX F**

**Get in Step to Move to Another Level**  
*(Ezra 3:10 – 13)*

**INTRODUCTION**

- A. The Completion of the Temple Foundation
- B. Lamentations
- C. The Hebrew Celebration
- D. Hebrew History Overview

**WHEN GOD SEEMS TO BE SILENT**

- A. Captivity
- B. No Word for 50 Years
- C. Another Flat Service

**EZRA AND THE ASSEMBLY PRAISES GOD**

- A. The Rewards of Hard Work
- B. The Silence is Broken
- C. Home, Again
- D. O Give Thanks Unto the Lord

**WE HAVE A REASON TO REJOICE**

- A. The Last Stone is Quarried and the Last Cedar is Felled
- B. The Last Cedar is Felled
- C. Move Out of Yesterday into Today
- D. God is Doing a New Thing
- E. Celebrate, Come On

## Blessed are the Flexible

*(Mark 2:13 – 3:6)*

### INTRODUCTION

- E. Blessed are the Flexible for They Shall Not Be Broken
- F. Falling into Routines
- G. The 7 Last Words of the Church ... *"We never did it that way before ..."*
- H. Legalism vs. the Status Quo
- I. Jesus and the Status Quo
- J. Jesus as Clark Kent and Jesus as Superman

### THE NARROWNESS OF THE LAW

- D. Traditions vs. Laws
- E. The Origin of Traditions
- F. Jesus Meets the Human Need

### FRIENDS WITH SINNERS

- E. Levi, the Sinner
- F. Levi, the Disciple
- G. Levi, the Dinner Host

### THE PROBLEM WITH FASTING

- F. Day of Atonement
- G. Public Piety of the Pharisees
- H. Parable of the Marriage Feast
- I. Relationship (*human beings*) vs. Rules (*traditions*)

### THE PROBLEM OF THE SABBATH

- A. The Sabbath Principle
  - a. Ordained by God
  - b. A Day of Rest
- B. The Law of Moses
- C. The Lord's Day
  - a. Set aside by Man
  - b. A Day of Worship
- D. Jewish Opposition
- E. The Sabbath was Made for Man Not Man for the Sabbath

**GOD IS CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN NEED**

- A. Traditions vs. Laws
- B. The Origins of Traditions
- C. Jesus Meets the Human Need

**NEWNESS OF LIFE (*Mk. 2:13 – 3:6*)**

- A. New Wine
- B. New Wineskins
- C. Open and Flexible; Alive and Relevant
- D. Blessed are the Flexible for They are Pliable in God's Hands

## **APPENDIX G**

**Note: Evaluation forms are completed by each trainer at the end of each training session (i.e., one for July. 8-23, 2006, equals a total of six Evaluation Forms)**  
**A Transformational Model Introducing Change By Bridging The Generations And Empowering Congregations In a Rural A.M.E. Church Setting**  
**Participant Evaluation Form**  
**7/8/06**

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**Trainers: Rev. Mae F. Peterson \_\_\_\_\_ Rev. Patrice Fields \_\_\_\_\_ Nigel Alston \_\_\_\_\_**

**TRAINING SESSION**

**1. What I like the most about the program/workshop?**

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**2. What I liked least about the program?**

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**3. How could the program be improved?**

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## **APPENDIX H**

### Notes of Discussions for Cultural Groups and Workshops

The cultural focus groups and workshops took place at Clover Garden AME Church, Burlington, North Carolina during the month of July 2006. The Cultural Focus Groups met on two consecutive Wednesday nights July 12, 2006 and July 19, 2006 from 7:00 pm- 9:00 pm. The workshops occurred on three consecutive Saturdays, July 8, 15, and 22, 2006 from 9:30 am-12:30 pm.

All sessions discussed the full range of topics related to bridging the generations and empowering the congregation that had been identified in advance based partly on responses to the evaluations and observations from the researcher and moderators during the sessions.

Upon the opening discussion among the different generations that were represented the groups with no hesitation recognized the vast difference in beliefs of how the church and community should be represented.

The younger generation spoke of the many ways of keeping them involved in the church, which consisted of the current dress codes and how the older generation shunned them because they no longer dressed like they were “supposed” to dress, as in the old days.

Interestingly enough it was the older generation that mentioned they felt unimportant and overlooked in critical decisions that are being made within the church walls.

#### **When asked the following questions responses varied:**

1. What are you as a member looking for from the church? Expectations, etc.?
  - a. Alively church that is not afraid to praise God.
  - b. A church who has a mission to help people in the local community
  - c. A church that caters to the youth in the community.
  - d. commitment from younger members to become effective and better leaders.
  - e. Engaging activities for the young and old.
  - f. Unity among all members, where they would work cohesively with one another.
2. Do you think there needs to be change in the church?
  - a. Younger members felt there should be a different order of fellowship on some Sundays, instead of the traditional opening of service which is consistent with the Doctrine and Discipline of the A.M.E. Church. These

members are those who attend other churches and try to fit other denominations within another.

- b. The concentration on money was another suggestion of change: it was stated that we as A.M.E.'s focus on money aspects instead of helping and giving back to the community. These comments from those few members who are new to the A.M.E. Church and unfamiliar with the A.M.E. doctrine (thus the need for the rediscovery of the use of the Discipline by teaching.
  - c. Elders of the church mentioned the need for more prayer to help restore the discord among families who grew up in the church.
  - d. Sermons that are teaching and instructional moments, that may help members who want a "12" step plan to salvation.
  - e. Members should attend a local fellowship that declares Christ's headship in all matters of doctrine and practice.
  - f. Members do not use their God given gifts to help with the leadership of the church. The same few members continue to do all of the work.
  - g. There needs to be realization that the church is a business as well as a sanctuary and haven for the persons who are seeking God and fulfillment for their inner self.
3. Do you think change will assist in the growth of the church?
    - a. These changes can help strengthen the church, but without dedication, commitment and the removal of jealousy, the changes will be futile.
  4. Will you be a part of bringing about positive change?
    - a. All members of the sessions stated verbally they would be committed to being a part of a positive change in order to see their church grow and be more prosperous in God.
  5. What is your prevailing attitude toward the church with regard to inclusiveness?
    - a. Christians should attend a local fellowship that declares Christ's headship in all matters of doctrine and practice.

Another discussion among those who were in attendance pertained to :

1. The feeling of the older generation that they are having to take a back seat after holding positions for fifteen and twenty years consecutively.
2. Accountability
3. Focus on Discipleship
4. More productive ministries
5. Cohesive fellowship.

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